NON-PROFIT PUNK

RAZORCAKE

#112

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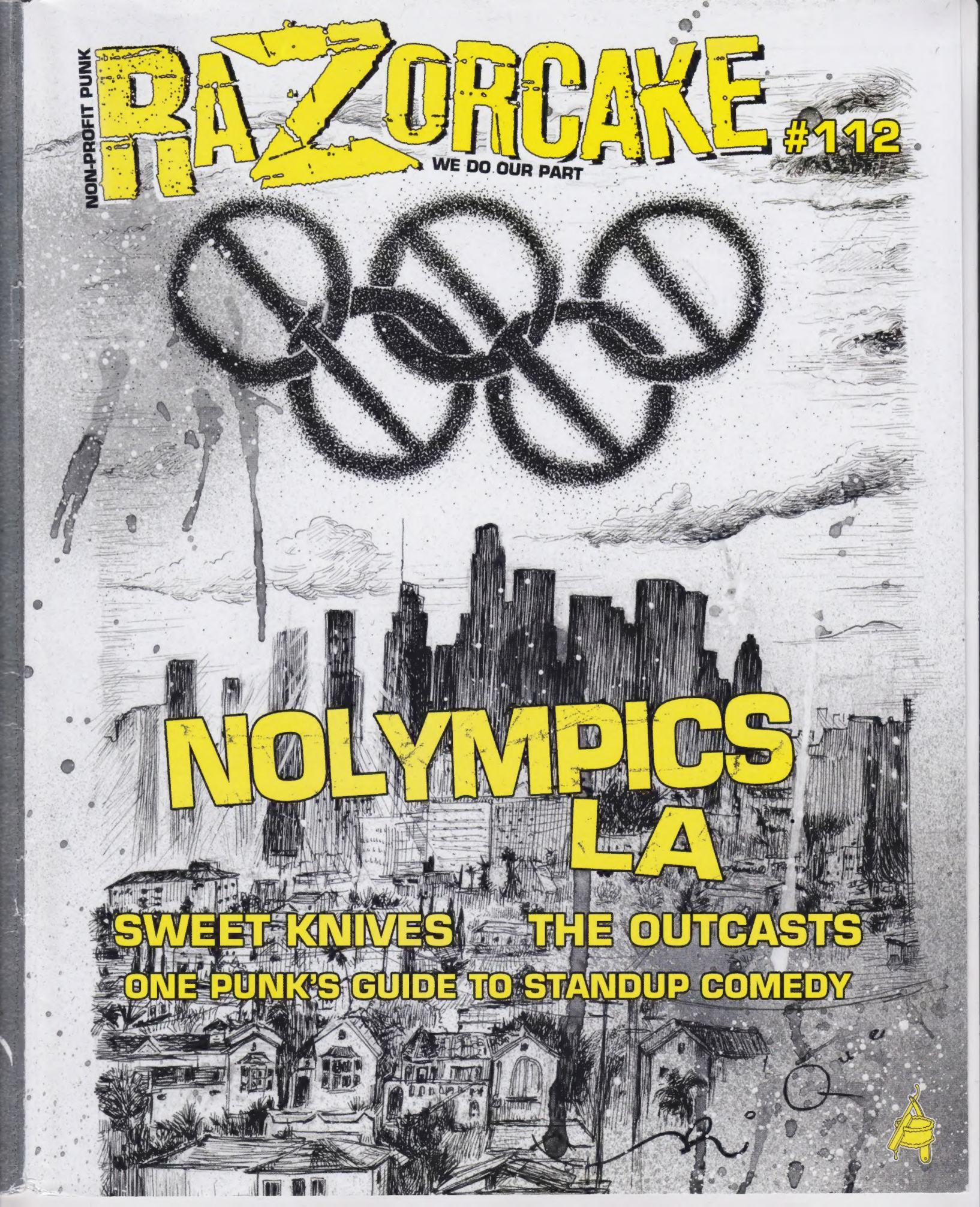

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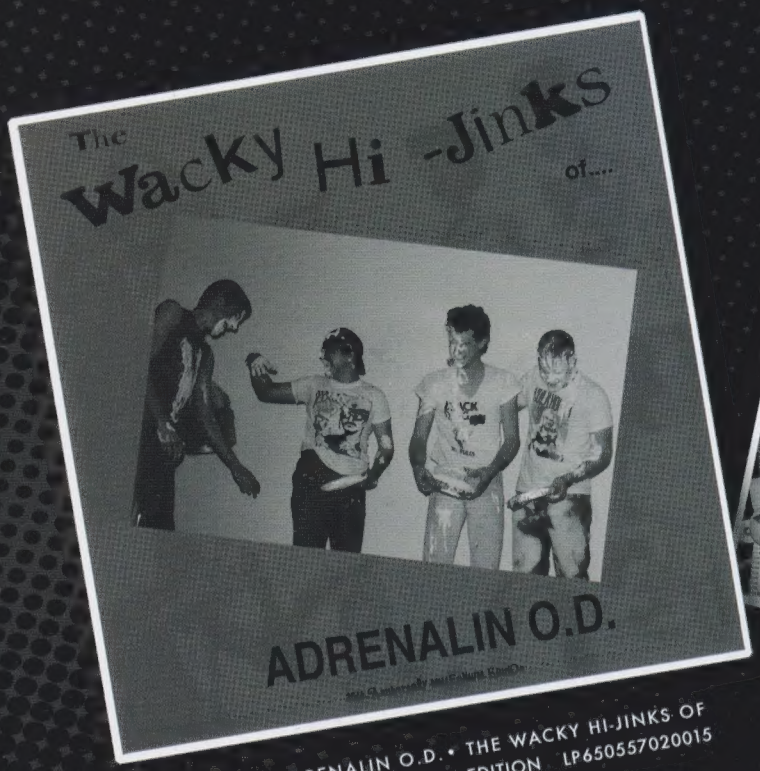

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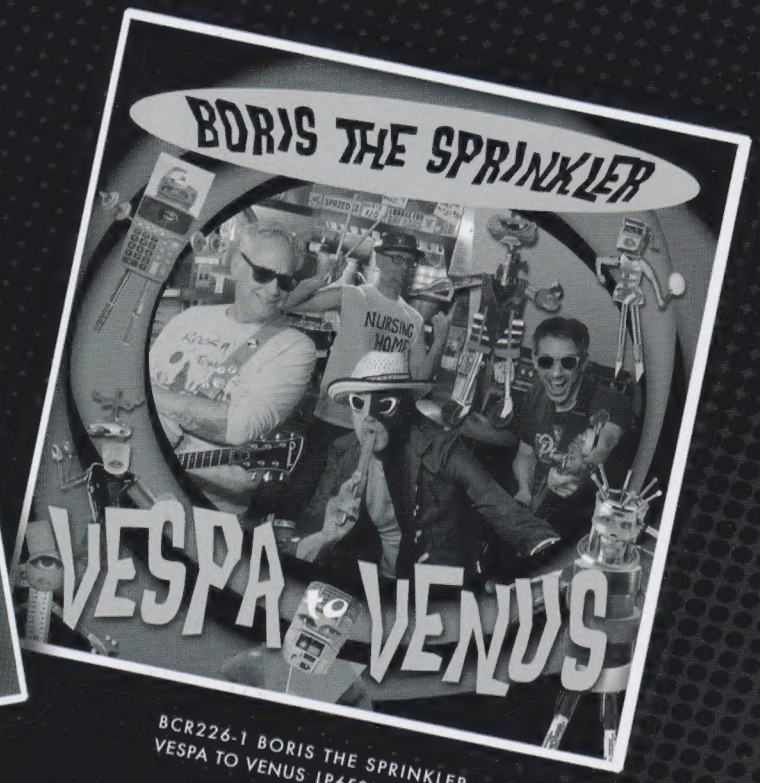

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RAZORCAKE is

a magazine dedicated to DIY punk, independent culture, and amplifying unheard voices. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, we're sustained by subscriptions, donations, advertisements, and grants. All support is greatly appreciated. We feel when we work together, life is a little more bearable. On one side is a terrifying culture of manipulation, and on the other side are all of us.

Anyone has the potential to be a Razorcake contributor. If you don't see or hear what you'd like covered, lend us a helping hand. If you're knowledgeable about DIY punk, are open to the editing of your work, can meet deadlines, and follow instructions, we'll consider your contribution. All creative content is done on a volunteer basis. Razorcake does not tolerate racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, or ableist bullshit—and we've held these ethics since our start in 2001. DIY punk can't be fully captured, understood, or expressed by white men. Diversity makes us a better punk organization. We're encouraging people who are marginalized—by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and personal experience—to submit material to Razorcake. Let's work with each other.

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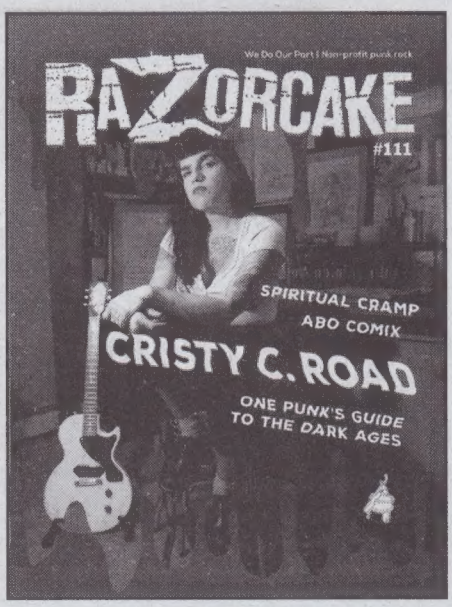
#110, June / July 2019



#111, August / September 2019

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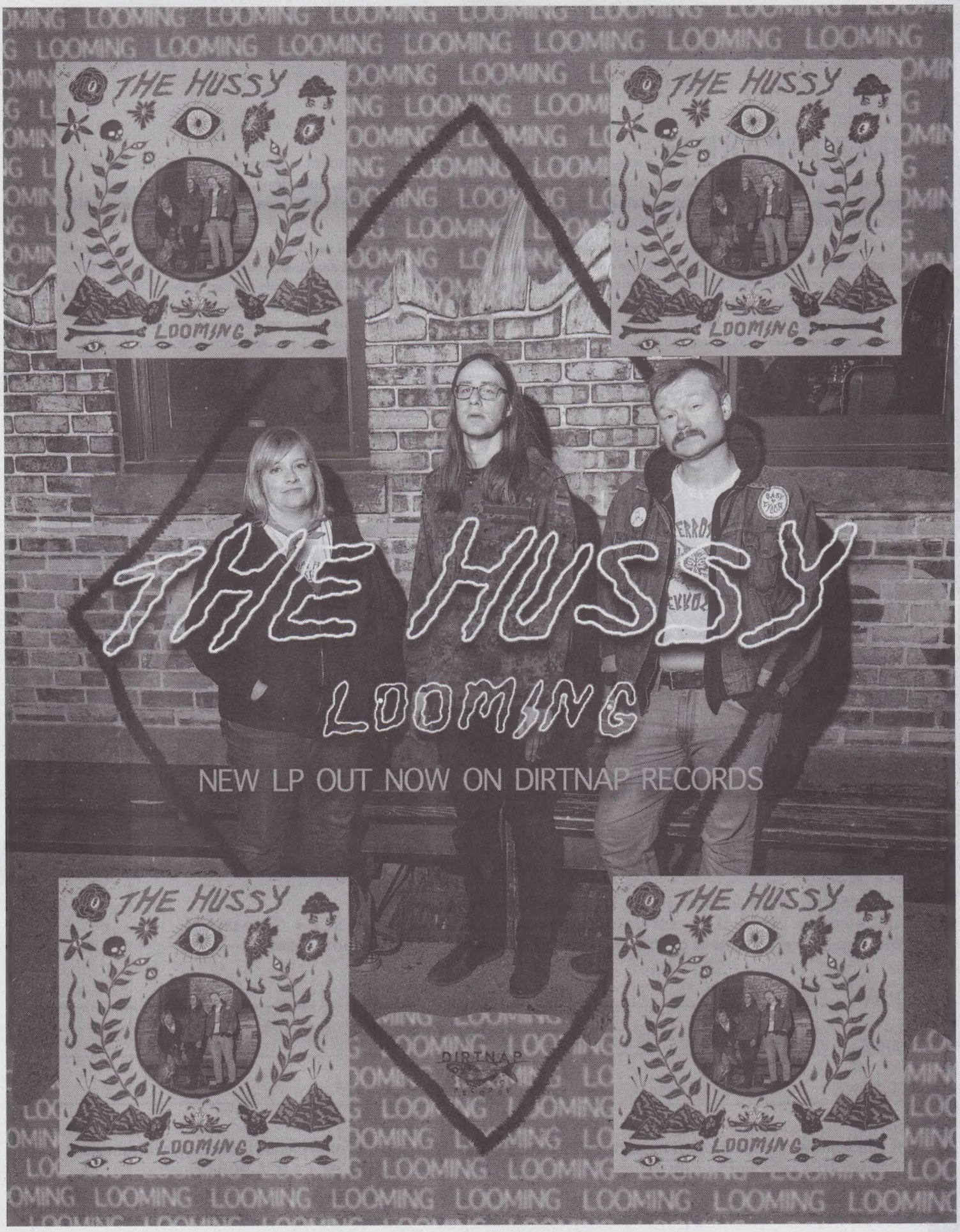
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The Dark Side of DIY

At first, I didn't know what happened. It sounded like a gunshot inches from the left side of my face. My cheek was wet, sticky, and stung. My glasses got knocked cockeyed and it took several accelerated heartbeats for the silence to be replaced by intense ringing. Did I just get shot in our backyard? I opened my eyes, looked down, and the left side of my torso was covered in bright green goo, like an alien from an '80s sci-fi movie had exploded right next to me. As I wiped the ectoplasm off, I double checked the ruptured sidewall of the bicycle tire for the recommended PSI. It was under, but I forgot there was puncture-resistant additive in the tube. Apparently, that affected how much the tube could be pumped up before it exploded, adding to the ear damage I already have from seeing so much live punk.

I unplugged the espresso machine my Dad got at a garage sale five years back, then plugged it back in. I pushed the button and nothing happened. No little red light to show it was heating. It took over an hour to take it apart and get to the back of the button. I discovered cracked plastic posts and a little circuit board. Fancy. I stuck some plastic shims in behind the button assembly. It worked for less than an hour until the shims started to melt from the hot water. Then the machine went completely dead again, in a different way than before. A week later, over the course of a day, I taught myself the rudiments of using an electronic multimeter, tested the circuit board, found the problem, got the switch working, and shimmed it in place with a metal door latch from the junk drawer. Three days in, and the machine still works with no guarantees it'll work tomorrow.

In order for Razorcake to exist as it does, there are many things we do to keep day-to-day costs down. Riding bikes for errands instead of using a car and making coffee for pennies on the dollar instead of $1,100 a year (which is what the average American spends, according to a financial report released by Acorns) is just the tip of the iceberg. The upside to DIY is full ownership of a prototype, because let's face it: Razorcake shouldn't exist. It's this sort of "impossibility" that's attractive. The Outcasts in 1977 jumped the walls of ignorance in Ireland, became a punk band, and are playing over forty years later. NOlympics entreats a simple proposition: Learn about what L.A.'s really going to have to do to host the Olympics and it becomes hard not to oppose the games. For us, DIY is not a Trojan horse for a snappy marketing campaign. It's a fundamentally different way to approach a world that is aggressively trying to turn us into consumers instead of creators, fixers, and real-world problem solvers.

This is not where I mount a unicorn that's majestically surfing a rainbow to DIY happiness. Stuff breaks all the time and we don't just toss it and go out and get a new one. That's unaffordable and unsustainable. Failure's most often draining, inconvenient, and bruising. Another flat tire. A broken gear tooth. A dead hard drive. Scraped knuckles. Non-lethal electrical shocks. An online database that's been faulty for about a decade and is like working with digital duct tape.

Repairing—tearing things down to parts and not being sure you can get them back together—is risky business. We may screw it up even worse. Some days, we just want the thing to work like it did yesterday and it just doesn't. Some days, we learned something new and are less intimidated when the thing fails again, slowly building a skill set of basic survival. It's far from perfect, but it's ours and makes me appreciate the true value in what's being built.

–Todd Taylor

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Cover illustration by RoQue Torres @roqueofmtb

"There's a series of fine lines between fighting for a cause and just fighting."

–Sara Gran

Claire DeWitt and the Bohemian Highway

THANK YOU: Armed with some Will Eisner and a photo with light streaming through downtown L.A., big thanks to RoQue Torres for the NOlympics cover illustration; Just out of the frame is the spot of duct tape on the bottom of Earl Liberty's boot thanks to Bone Dust for Donna's illo.; Two people stuck in a massive gelatin mold thanks to Bill Pinkel for Jim's illo.; Anyone taking bets that Brad's illo. for Sean gets this issue kicked back from prisons?; Fully anti-Flooned Cohibatator™ thanks to Steve Thueson for Nørb's illo.; Detective Drazan Vs. the Dastardly Poster Stealer thanks to Shane Milner for Dale's illo.; "of grown men who leak bullets instead of tears" thanks to RoQue Torres for the Puro Pinche Poetry illo.; Format fluidity conundrum in the modern world thanks to Laura Collins for the Chicken illo.; "Political correctness isn't killing comedy. Unfunny, shitty comedians are killing comedy" thanks to Tyler Sonnichsen, TJ Ferguson, Jeffrey Chastain, Lou Tingle, and Lauren Denitzio for the One Punk's Guide to Standup Comedy, photos, and layout; Never thought of dunking my hand in hot wax at a candle store thanks to Mark Murrmann and Eric Baskauskas for the Sweet Knives photos and layout; "The more you learn about it, it's pretty hard not to oppose" thanks to Steve Couch co-interviewing NOlympics L.A.; Here's to mum's advice of not studding your jackets through the lining—add in a wee in-layer thing thanks to Kevin Dunn, Bernie Charmot, Bernie McAllister, and Jessee Zeroxed for The Outcasts interview, photos, and layout.

"It's the frustrations of black life told through punk rock, and it's Soul Glo's best work yet." –Chris Terry,* The Nigga in Me Is Me *LP. Thanks to 112's rotation of music, zine, and book reviewers: Sean Koepenick, Nørb, Kurt Morris, Kayla Greet, Mark Twistworthy, Juan Espinosa, Art Ettinger, Paul J. Comeau, Ryan Nichols, Ty Stranglehold, Rich Cocksedge, The Lord Kveldulfr, Emma Alice Johnson, Keith Rosson, Sean Arenas, Mike Frame, Chris Terry, Lorien Lamarr, Matt Werts, Indiana Laub, Theresa W., Matt Average, Steve Adamyk, Jimmy Alvarado, Simone Carter, Gwen Static, Chad Williams, Billups Allen, Craven Rock, Tim Brooks, Ian Wise, Rick V., Jim Woster, jimmy cooper, Michael T. Fournier, Tricia Ramos, and Adrian Salas.

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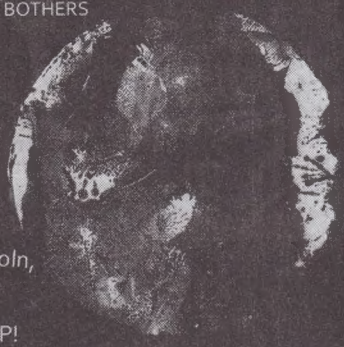

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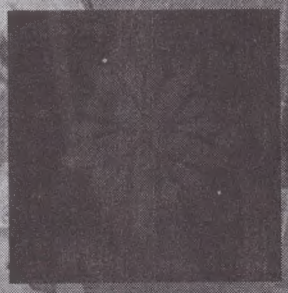

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RAZORCAKE

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COLUMNS

6 Donna Ramone *Never Let Me Forget*
8 Jim Ruland *Lazy Mick*
11 Ben Snakepit *Snakepit*
12 Sean Carswell *A Monkey to Ride the Dog*
15 Sophia Zarders *Our Lady of Cacophony*
16 Rev. Nørb *American Grilled Cheese Review*
18 Designated Dale *I'm Against It*
20 Dan Monick *Photo Page*
21 Art Fuentes *Resist!*
23 Rachel Murray Framingheddu *Photo Page*
24 *Puro Pinche Poetry y Cuentos: Gritos del Barrio* Edited by Ever Velasquez and Eugenia Nicole
26 Rhythm Chicken *Dinghole Reports*
28 Chris Boarts Larson *Photo Page*
31 James Spooner *No Fun*

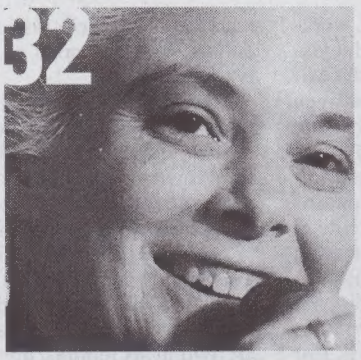
FEATURES

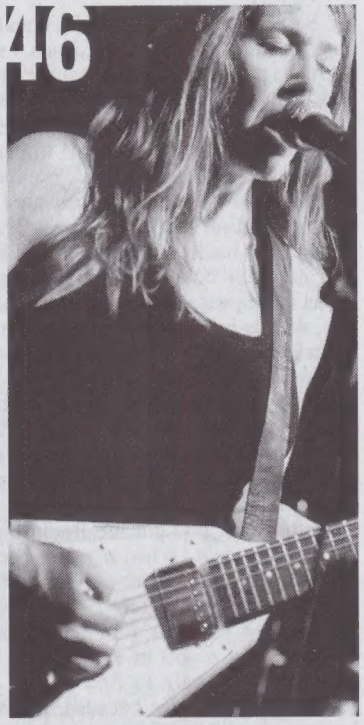
32 *One Punk's Guide to Standup Comedy* by Tyler Sonnichsen
46 *Sweet Knives* by Todd Taylor
62 *NOlympics LA* by Daryl Gussin and Steve Couch
68 *The Outcasts* by Kevin Dunn

FAVORITES // REVIEWS

76 Top 5s *Amyl And The Sniffers, Soul Glo, Condor, Snakes, OWTH*
78 Record *This is the punk vinyl equivalent of a Criterion Collection DVD. Beer City deserves major kudos.*
104 Zine *Reads like it was written by Mike Faloon in spiked wristbands, leading to unintentionally amusing exchanges.*
109 Book The Fountainhead's *sold more than six and a half million copies. How the hell did that happen?*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Julia Ann Mendez





The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is.
Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Kari Hamanaka, Rishbha Bhagi, Donna Ramone, Marcos Siref, Dayna Castillo, Derek Whipple, Ever Velasquez, Nicole Macias, Paul "super archiver" Silver, Ethan Shapiro, Matthew Hart, Chris Baxter, Kayla Greet, Jimmy Alvarado, Yvonne Drazan, Dale Drazan, Josh Rosa, Jennifer Federico, Elly Dallas, Steve Couch, Samantha McBride, Dino Everett, Skinny Dan, Alice Bag, Candace Hansen, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Jason Willis, Matt Average, Joe Dana, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Adrian Salas, Adrian Chi, Aaron Kovacs, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Kevin Dunn, Jennifer Whiteford, Steve Thueson, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Lauren Denitzio, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, CJ Miller, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, John Miskelly, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Chris Devlin, Emma Alice Johnson, Tim Brooks, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, Chris Terry, Jackie Rusted, Art Fuentes, Dylan Davis, Becky Minjarez, Keith Rosson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, Danny Rust, Jamie L. Rotante, Daisy Noemi, Eden Kittiver, Jessee Zeroxed, Garrett Barnwell, Nørb, Chris Mason, Tim Jamison, Kiyoshi Nakazawa, Shane Milner, James Rosario, Martin Wong, Rosie Gonce, Cathy Hannah, Mikie Manzer, Cristy C. Road, Eskander Fairweather, Sam Grinberg, Rosie Gonce, Silas Hagland, Andre Lux, Philomena, Oz Thompson, Rick V., Eric Koucheravy, Jeremy Jones, Lorien Lamarr, Will Kenneth, Will Malkus, Alxis Ratkevich, RoQue Torres, Johnny and Elwood Wells, Billups Allen, Andrew Wagher, Abdul Vas, Mark Handski, John Ross Bowie, Deb Frazin, Anthony Mehlhaff, Nick Roseblade, Ryan Leach, Daniel Makagon, and Adam Perry.

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This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by support by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission.

Zine Librarians?

I call bullshit.

Yesterday I went to a professional, work-sanctioned conference about zines, I shit you not. I can put "zines" on my resume and it will look really good to future employers. Between my decade of working with "all-ages music and arts community spaces," fifteen years of "independent publishing" experience, prowess with all the design software I pirated (not to mention the couple years I've been working at a medical library and volunteering as a dinosaur bone cataloger), libraries see me as an impeccably skilled, non-traditional hire, who is humanities-driven yet versed in the sciences (and wouldn't you know it, I'm also so *diverse*). I call bullshit.

As someone who was chronically unemployed between 2005 and 2012, I put my all into the DIY community we all love so much. Zines, shows, records—if someone needed help or support, I was there. It gave me purpose, it brought me friendships, and it put me in debt. When my first bachelor's degree in journalism never led to any kind of moneymaking career, I went back and got another bachelor's in art history and business. Got a job in a goddamn "punk" artist's gallery, only to find myself jobless not even a year later because my manager told everyone that, as a twenty-eight-year-old prepping gallery walls in cut-up band shirts, I clearly must have "anger issues" based on the music I listen to.

I later took an office job with republicans (who openly thought women were second-class citizens) that required me to commute nearly a hundred miles round-trip every weekday for ten dollars an hour, no benefits. I never mentioned my life outside of that building in front of coworkers out of fear. Yet, I regularly left there and drove straight to a show where I worked the door. After a year of this, I was so fed up with what my life had become. I left Los Angeles for Salt Lake City, where I got a data entry job with the postal service. At thirty, I was finally being paid twenty dollars an hour, with raises, and I even had health insurance. The day I received a paycheck for over one thousand dollars, I sat and cried in my car for nearly twenty minutes.

After five years, moving several states away, paying off all of my debt, saving up a little, and getting carpal tunnel syndrome from the data entry, I took the risk of trying for a career again. With encouragement from the greatest, most supportive partner on this or any planet, I left my safe federal job. I got a part-time library position that didn't pay me enough to eat, and a cataloging position at a natural history museum that didn't pay me at all. Within six months, my hustle got me into a fulltime, benefitted position with a future. I took on the work of three professionals and made myself indispensable. A full year in, I started to display health-related zines on my office desk and people were into it.

About a year ago I discovered that "zine librarian" is an actual wage-earning title some people have. Libraries have zine collections. Punks get jobs at libraries all the time. For the first time in my life, I saw promise and hope in a career. In April, I went to a massive professional conference in Ohio for college librarians, with over three thousand attendees. I walked in so excited. I left so fucking pissed. Turns out, librarians love to talk about zines, independent music, diversity, equity, inclusion, liberation, community, and DIY—but they're all a bunch of fucking posers.

I went to a community engagement and hip hop panel, and it took me at least thirty minutes before I realized they were just taking about throwing shows and putting out mixtapes. Near the end, they asked us to discuss some ideas we might take back to our institutions and not one person considered just asking their local DIY scene to come in and use the wealth of resources we all have access to.

I went to a diversity, equity, and inclusion keynote and during the Q&A, a white woman, while fully crying into the microphone, asked, "But *how* do I just ask people of color where they're from?!" (Answer: you fucking don't, it's not your business—if you're friends with them, they'll tell you themselves in time). I went to a zine workshop, and it was just crayons, paper, and a long stapler. I brought an issue of *Razorcake* and some of my zines to trade and one of the organizers questioned whether I was actually the author. Trading zines was a totally foreign concept to the people leading the zine workshop. My attempt to meet some like-minded professionals had put me in the crosshairs of normies who just wanted me to color on a half-sheet of paper and let *them* be the zinesters (a term that I refuse to accept, but I acknowledge its use).

Librarians have successfully taken our radical politics and DIY ethics and neoliberalized them. I cannot tell you the number of times someone has lectured me about equity, diversity, and inclusion (their absolute favorite three words of 2019)—yet when I wanted to move up in my career, or lead anything, I was told over and over, "Get your Master's degree in Library Science, and then you can talk." Some librarians honestly believe their profession alone should earn them a nomination for sainthood. They haven't a clue that entire communities exist that would never expect them to do the right thing in someone else's best interests, myself included.

I went to a show after I left the conference that night, trying to figure out how I even felt about all this. On the one hand, I'm really employable for the first time in my life. I can be a little open about my personal life in a professional setting. I can use and promote zines and music as part of my job if I really wanted to. On the other hand, I hated how much librarianship was pretending to be the gold standard of social justice and empathy, rather than admit their profession is over eighty percent white because minorities were barred from using libraries less than a generation ago—not to mention they require a master's degree but pay shit salaries.

My attempt to meet some like-minded professionals had put me in the crosshairs of normies who just wanted me to color on a half-sheet of paper and let them be the zinesters.

BONE DUST | @BON3DUST

Someone from the conference was at the show and approached me. I thought, "Finally, someone in libraries who fucking gets it." Nope. He was your typical punk dude who was angry, drunk, and a massive weirdo who often treaded into creep territory. As I hid in the crowd avoiding him, and the bands started to play, the storm clouds that had been raging in my head all day finally started to part.

In the same way I navigate DIY communities and dedicate myself to learning and educating on the topics of racism and xenophobia, I can direct that same energy toward librarians. If they want zines and local music and inclusion, then they better contact their local artists, punks, and neighborhoods. Who better to teach them than one of their own? They need to know the ways communities distrust them, from someone who still doesn't fully trust librarians. If I'm not invited in to teach these devils, then I have no trouble forcing my way into any door they leave slightly ajar. My message may seem harsh, but I promise to give them punk points for coming to my workshop. Ultimately, this all comes from a place of caring—I care about libraries, and I care about my job. Libraries fucking rule, we should all support them. I truly believe they can and should be even better.

I submitted my first proposal about giving this exact talk to a really progressive librarian conference next year. There's an upvote/downvote feature to help determine what proposals are accepted. I sent it out to friends to help me gain votes, and everyone was stoked—a partnership with libraries sounded really inspiring, and one hundred and eighteen upvotes later I was the highest-ranking proposal. I also received six downvotes, the most thumbs-down of any proposal. Exactly what I expected from librarianship.

No matter what happens, even if I fail spectacularly, this is going to be a fun fight. It always feels so good to present DIY to someone new and ask them to join in. And if I convince just one librarian, at one library, to let bands book shows at their library—oh shit. It's going to set the best, most dangerous precedent. The very least of which is libraries having to budget for a lot more drywall repair.

–Donna Ramone

"How deep?" we asked. "No one knows."

Dreaming Underwater, Part One

Incidents of Travel in Yucatán

Imagine you're in the jungle. You come across a hole in the ground. The hole is deep. The hole is so deep there are trees growing out of the bottom. You climb into the hole and discover the hole is more than a hole but a cave with stalactites hanging down and stalagmites reaching up from the bottom, which is covered in cool, clear water. You can tell the water is clear because parts of the cave are shallow. You can see little black fish swimming in the water. But parts of the cave are murkier than others. You can't see the bottom here because as, near as you can tell, there isn't one. It just goes and goes into the darkness. You are not alone in this cave. There are swarms of mosquitoes, swoops of swallows, clouds of bats. The water beckons. The darkness calls. You jump.

You have entered the cenote.

*

The first time I went to a cenote, I was not so brave.

I'd accompanied my wife on a work trip to Mérida, the capital city of Yucatán. I was looking forward to the trip. I'd be traveling with a group of teachers who were attending a conference. I imagined long days of writing broken up by conversations about books and art and the mysteries of the Mayan world.

That's not what happened.

It turns out the teachers treated the trip like a working vacation and teachers on vacation behave like anyone else on vacation. They partied. A lot. It was like going on vacation with a bunch of plumbers.

*

I went to the bus station and hired a taxi to take me to Dzibilchaltún, an archaeological site about ten miles north of the city. The main feature of the site is the ruins of the Temple of the Seven Dolls. At sunrise on the vernal equinox sunlight streams through the doorway. It's some Raiders of the Lost Ark type shit.

It was not the vernal equinox. It was extremely hot and I had the site to myself. Just me and a thousand pale, yellow butterflies.

After exploring the site, I went to Cenote Xlakah, which means "old town" in Mayan, to cool off. The water in this cenote sits on the surface, ringed by limestone rock. It's quite large, well over two hundred meters long and a hundred meters wide. I'd read that the locals use it as a swimming hole. Although parts of the cenote are shallow, some parts are very deep.

Depth in a cenote is misleading. Cenotes are not swimming pools with even surfaces and symmetrical shapes. In the northeastern area of Cenote Xlakah the bottom drops off at a sharp angle and runs to a depth of forty-four meters. However, at that depth you are at least one hundred meters away from the opening of the cenote. In other words, you are now in an underwater cave.

At the very bottom of this cave is a narrow cavern, which descends to a depth of sixty-two meters and is at least twelve hundred meters in length. That's three-quarters of a mile long.

Archaeologists have pulled wooden carvings and bone fragments from Cenote Xlakah, and in ancient times a cult sprang up around it.

There was a lot going on in this cenote.

No one was swimming. The only other people present were two women sitting in the shade, engaged in quiet conversation. A huge lily pad sat in the center of the cenote, attracting all manner of bugs and insects.

As I approached the cenote, I began to lose my nerve. Although I was quite hot, and wanted to cool off, the cenote did not look inviting. A cenote is not a pond or a lake. There isn't a sandy beach to use as an entry point. Either you climb down into the cenote or you take a leap of faith and jump.

I worried if I jumped in I might not be able to climb out. I found a spot where I could dip my feet in the water, which attracted the attention of several black fish that nibbled on my skin. Some people like this sensation. I am not one of those people. I pulled my feet out of the cenote and left.

When I got back to the entrance of the site, my taxi driver was sitting in the driver's seat, reading the Bible.

He asked me if I went swimming in the cenote, and when I told him no, he wanted to know why not.

"Tenebroso," I said in my extremely limited Spanish, which means spooky.

The driver laughed and laughed.

*

It is generally accepted that a little less than sixty-six million years ago a comet or asteroid or some other space object struck the earth. The object was anywhere from ten to fifty miles wide, and it wiped out approximately seventy-five percent of life on earth. This was when all the dinosaurs died.

The precise site where this object struck the earth is in the northwest corner of the Yucatán peninsula.

*

Two years ago I went back to Dzibilchaltún. I was determined to swim in the cenote. I brought my wife Nuvia, her sister, and my brother-in-law with me. It was just as hot as it had been during my previous visit, but this time there were dozens of locals at the cenote, splashing and swimming and having a good time.

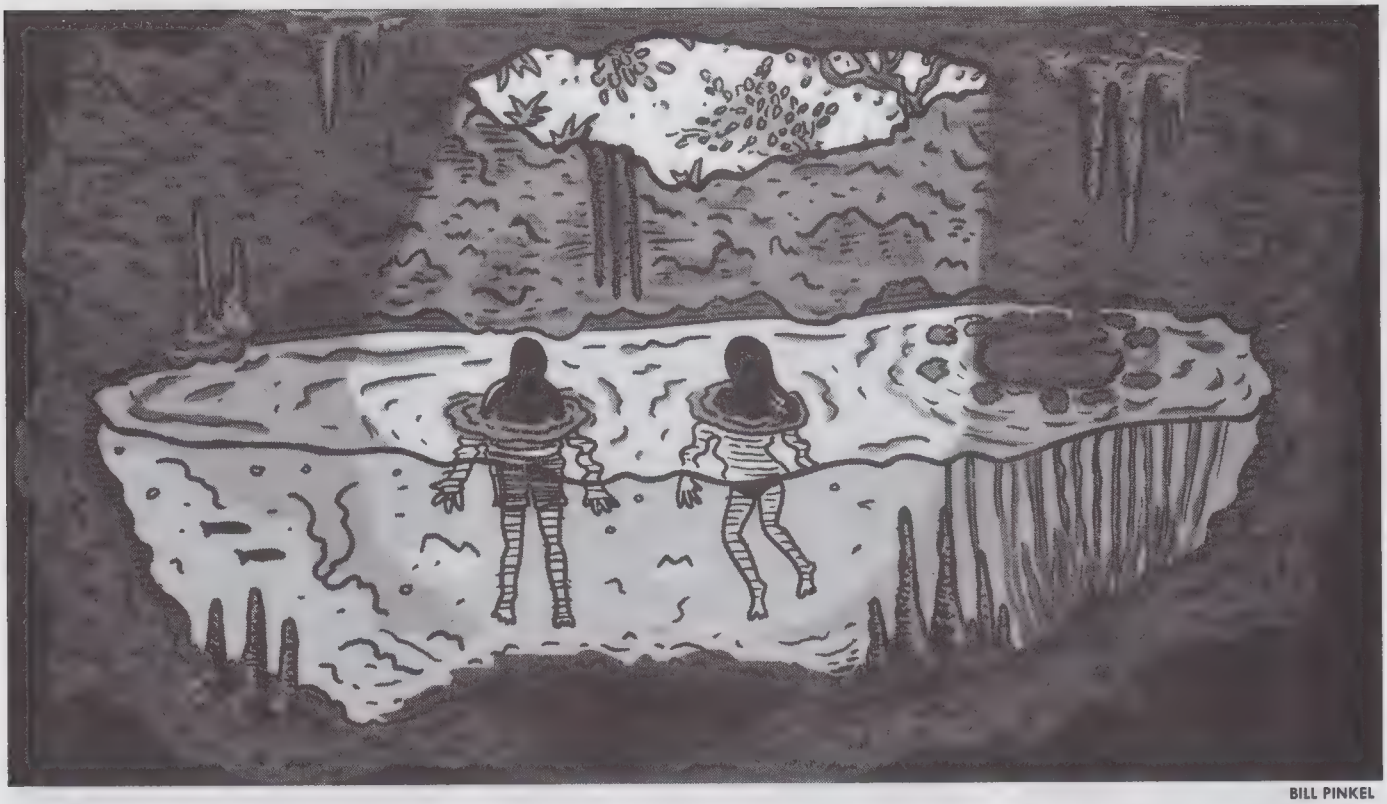
We followed the locals' lead and leapt from the rocks into the part of the cenote where the waters were deep, but not too deep. The fish left me alone as long as I kept moving. While posing for a photograph, I drifted too close to the lily pad and one of the vines seemed to twine around my leg, which is a terrifying sensation in any body of water, but especially in the deep waters of a cenote. I imagined a creature pulling me down into Xlakah's subterranean lair and decorating its cavern with my bones.

*

There are no rivers in the Yucatán peninsula. No lakes. No ponds. Just the underground river system that connects many of the cenotes. When the Spanish came, the apparent lack of water bedeviled the soldiers who came to establish haciendas in the region. Some of the cave systems are so large that entire cities, thousands of Mayans, could retreat underground.

*

This summer Nuvia and I returned to Yucatán and we explored a number of cenotes. The concierge at our hotel told us about one close to the property. We could walk there, she explained, but it was very hot and there are many mosquitoes. We'd also become acquainted with a species of large fly



BILL PINKEL

In that place where it was very dark

and very cold, my mind and body were united in the knowledge that I was in the presence of the unknowable.

with a red head and a sharp bite. We hired a driver for two hundred pesos to take us.

The hole went straight down. A sturdy set of steel stairs had been built into the rock. Looking down we could see three ropes anchored to the rock floating on the surface in the shape of a triangle. One side faced a ledge where we could jump off into the triangle. On the left side of the triangle the water was shallow. On the right, it was very, very deep.

"How deep?" we asked.

"No one knows," said the driver.

Nuvia had brought her goggles with her, so I put them on and swam to the deepest part of the cenote. The bottom of the cenote angled down and away. It was easy to imagine it as a lair or passageway to a new world. In that place where it was very dark and very cold, my mind and body were united in the knowledge that I was in the presence of the unknowable. A diver could mark the depth, measure the length of the opening, but the truth was far more primal. This was a mouth; to go any farther would be to enter a place from which I might not return.

I swam to the surface and did not look down again.

*

A few days later, we went to the cenote at Hacienda Mucuyché. The hacienda charges an entry free, which includes a tour of the property and a guided visit to two cenotes connected by an aquatic corridor. It was expensive—just under five hundred pesos per person—but worth it.

It was odd exploring a cenote as part of a group. There were about thirty of us. Life jackets were mandatory, but we were also provided with masks for clearer views underwater.

The first cenote was large and relatively shallow with steps cut into the rock for easy access. After touring the ruins of the hacienda for half an hour, the cold, clear water was a relief. After about ten minutes we were herded along to the aquatic corridor, a manmade lazy river overgrown with jungle vines and a waterfall.

Then we came to the second cenote, which was truly massive, and dominated by a massive column of rock in the center of it where a stalactite and a stalagmite had connected. There was no opening to the outside world in this chamber so it was very dark. The hacienda had installed small LED lights to help guide us along, but the lights also provided a sense of how majestic the cenote was.

Nuvia pointed out a clay pot sitting on the bottom about fifteen meters down. I imagined the pot being used for ancient rituals I couldn't comprehend. To what strange purpose had this vessel been placed at the bottom of the cenote?

Afterwards, while toweling off and returning our lifejackets, I shared my theories with Nuvia. She laughed them off. Her interpretation was much more practical.

"The cenotes were wells that provided water for the village. Someone dropped their pot!"

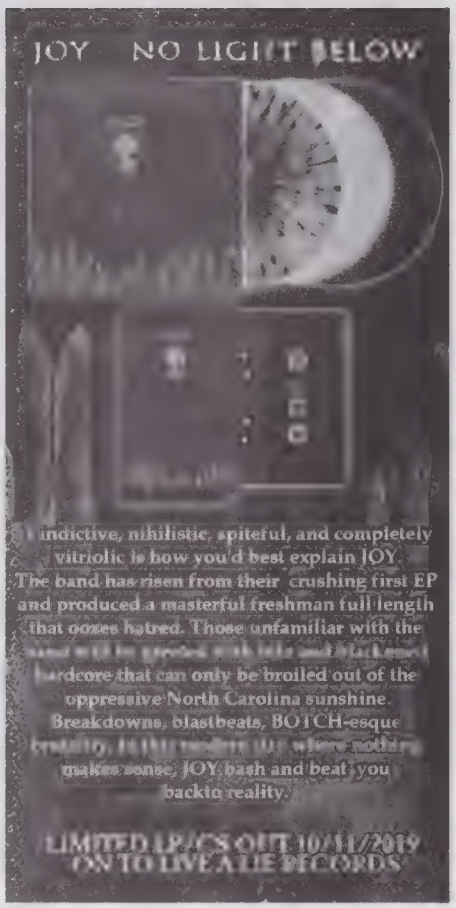
I thought of some poor Mayan kid who'd been sent to the well for water and had to return home without water or a pot to put it in.

"Mom's gonna kill me!"

This I could understand: an all-too familiar human error.

To be continued

–Jim Ruland



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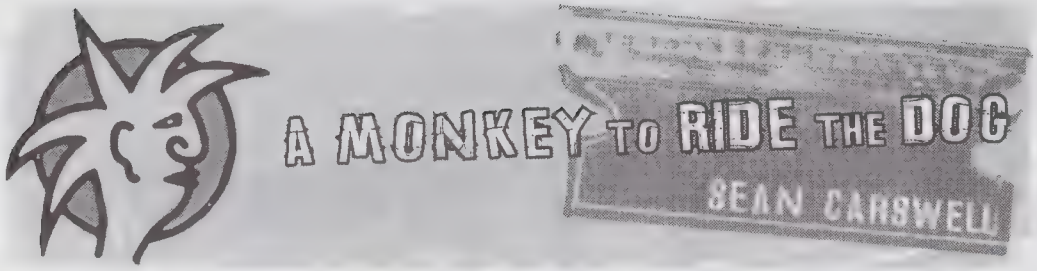

Entwined lives trying to make a culture better than a stupid reality show.

Just a Sentiment

I'm looking for something to listen to while I run when I come across the Shallow Cuts album *Empty Beach Town*. I haven't played it for a while because, even though the songs have almost nothing to do with politics, they're tangled in my mind with thoughts of the current presidential administration.

It's not the Shallow Cuts' fault. When they recorded the record in April 2015, the current president was just an actor on a hateful reality TV show. In April 2015, I didn't even know who the guy was. I'd heard of him in the same way I'd heard of other people who were on reality TV. I knew a name. I was vaguely aware of a show, and, if I really had to—which I never did—I maybe could've told you the title. But he wasn't someone I wasted a thought on. The Shallow Cuts may have felt the same way. I'm sure they didn't want their record spinning thoughts of a would-be dictator in my head.

Anyway, I give it another listen because it's great music to jog to. The rhythm matches my pace. Right foot bass, left foot snare. I played this album with nearly every run in 2016. Ah, 2016: you were great until November.

I was training for a half-marathon at the time. I knew I couldn't wear headphones when I ran it, and I knew that there'd be bands and DJs along the course. I was guaranteed to hear Fleetwood Mac and Rolling Stones covers. Each of my ears house a tiny, hungry worm that feeds on bad music. Even a passing encounter with some of these songs can set that worm singing for hours. To combat this, I keep catchy songs in my head. I sing them to myself as a way of shutting up the worms. Around the time of this half, I was using Shallow Cuts' "Common Theme" as my defense against the earworms.

The half came on the Sunday after the 2016 presidential election. I ran it with my wife and at her pace, which meant the run took almost two and a half hours. The whole time, I thought about the election, about the majority of my family voting for this dickhead in one of the states that actually matters in the electoral map. I thought about the promised attacks on immigrants and my wife, running alongside me, an immigrant. Is this how my family felt about her? That she needed to get the fuck out? Or did they make distinctions? That my wife was a "good" immigrant, not like the rest of them, who—according to the new president—are murderers and rapists? Were we back to the days of my childhood in the backwoods South, where every adult, it seemed, told me things like "there are good n*****s and bad n*****s"? Had those days ever gone away?

So I ran for two and a half hours with these kinds of thoughts. In between, I'd pass a band playing some bullshit song, sing "Common Theme" to myself to get the bullshit out of my head, and go back to thoughts of the misery that would be the next four years.

As far as I can tell, "Common Theme" is really about the narrator's friend, who suffers from addiction and is slowly dying of it, and the narrator trying to tell the friend that, if he needs help, "There's still a place for you here." It captures a feeling I know well, of watching someone I love slowly kill himself, knowing that he has to take the first step on his own, but also wanting him to know that I'm here and I want to help. That, in itself, makes for a beautiful song. Only, in my head, the meaning of the song is lost to the moment that overshadowed it.

In 2017, I went to Germany. For several summers prior to that, I'd taken motorcycle trips with my dad. We'd ridden all around the U.S. and Canada. I have an uncle who lives in Germany. He invited us to come out there. He said he'd lead the way for us in his little convertible, serve as both our guide and translator. My dad was starting to age out of riding a motorcycle. He probably already had aged out, but this offer was too good to pass up. We rode down through German wine country, into the Black Forest and Bavaria, through the Alps, then up to the capitol. My earworms were in full voice during that trip, only they were picking some better songs. Every time I saw a sign for something-platz, the earworms would sing, "Now you sit alone smoking/ by the statues in Marianenplatz" from the Shallow Cuts song "Berlin Streets." The closer I got to Berlin, the more that song got lodged in my head.

In Berlin, we visited an exhibit called "The Topography of Terror." It's right along a preserved stretch of the Berlin Wall. As the title suggests, the Topography maps out how an authoritarian comes to power. The first step is to create uncertainty by discrediting the people and institutions that produce and disseminate knowledge: the press, intellectuals, and academics. Then create scapegoats. The press, intellectuals, and academics are among the scapegoats, but you need a few more, typically members of religious or ethnic minority groups. You craft a narrative about how these scapegoats are destroying the nation. Then, you further that narrative by envisioning a mythical past of your nation, one in which all the people looked like you, believed like you, and everything was good. You sell that promise to the majority, and they'll give up most of their rights to get back to that mythical place.

So I'm standing alongside what remains of the Berlin Wall, reading about Hitler's path to power, looking at my father and uncle who both support the current administration, and I'm floored. I start to wonder about the sixty-three percent of Germans who didn't support Hitler. How did they live among the Nazis? How did they reconcile their feelings for family members who supported the Nazis, but whom they still loved? When did they know to get out of Germany? Where was out? Should I start saving money and looking at maps now?

Looking back on this moment now, with the benefit of two years of hindsight, knowing that all along our southern border asylum seekers who have committed no crime are being imprisoned and concentrated into camps, seeing the increased racism my wife has had to deal with, and facing the increased marginalization of myself and my ideas as an academic, I'm still trying to answer those questions.

And, damn it, every time I hear "Berlin Streets," I remember walking alone around Berlin, singing different lines to the song: "Is there a place you'll be all right? Can you start now?" and "I don't buy you don't give a fuck so don't lie." The whole time, I wondered how bad it'll get before it gets better.

I still wonder.

In December of 2015, I sent in my ninetieth column for Razorcake. I said it was my last. Three and a half years later, I'm back. One of the things I did during that time was write for other publications. For a lot of 2017, I wrote articles about how awful the current administration is. I found that, if I put the president's name in a title, I would get more readers. I also found that I could get published more easily if I connected whatever I wanted to write about to the current administration. Doing this actually raised my profile. I published a lot and got paid because there was suddenly a market for resistance.

Initially, I thought I was resisting. Now, I wonder if I was.

I wonder if I was giving the guy too much credit. I'm not at all sure that he understands the topography of totalitarianism. I'm not even sure he could read that sentence. I wonder if writers like me make a boring guy more interesting.

Because really, he's boring. Average. If you want a barely literate, racist, old, white guy who sometimes says things that are so stupid it hurts your brain, you can find him anywhere. There are four of those guys on my block. And I live in California. Go back to my hometown, and you'd be lucky to find four guys who *aren't* that guy. The only thing interesting about him, really, is that he turned the White House into a reality TV show. Even the interest in that is waning. Season Three is just like Season One. He's already signed on for Season Four. Let's cancel it there.

More than that, let's all agree to pay less attention to him. Of course, we need to fight his policies. The camps along the border need to stop. The attack on unions needs to be reversed. The wealth gap needs to shrink. We need to enact a million plans to reverse or at least mitigate climate change. We need to acknowledge that racism and sexism are institutionalized, our economic system thrives off them, and this needs to change. But we can do all this without talking about the dickhead and his reality show.

This brings me back to the Shallow Cuts. *Empty Beach Town* is an honest and powerful record. As far as I can tell, most of the songs are about addiction and recovery, or about the difficulty being a punk who's getting older and doesn't know how to do that. The album needs to go back to being just that in my head. I need to get back to where our culture is more and beyond the boundaries of national politics.

The last song on the record, "Just a Sentiment," starts out, "It's been a long life of small crowds, no lines, and skateboards." It reminds me of my first book release at a little punk rock store in Cocoa Beach, Florida. People came: a small crowd, no lines. There was a half pipe in the backyard. Some skaters cut through the release to go back there and ride it. One stranger randomly stopped by, had a beer with me, and bought my book. Sixteen years later, he renamed himself J Wang and played guitar and sang for Shallow Cuts. The two events have no bearing on each other, but when I listen to the song, I think of all of us in our entwined lives, trying to make a culture better than a stupid reality show. I think of the million things we've done—zines, records, books, shows, paintings, comics, all of it—in contrast to the toxic narcissism that seems to have taken over the mainstream. And I want to find a way to focus on those of us who, as J sings, have "all this time nothing but the best intentions."

–Sean Carswell

BRAD BESHAW

If you want a barely-literate, racist, old, white guy who sometimes says things that are so stupid it hurts your brain, you can find him anywhere. There are four of those guys on my block. And I live in California.

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AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

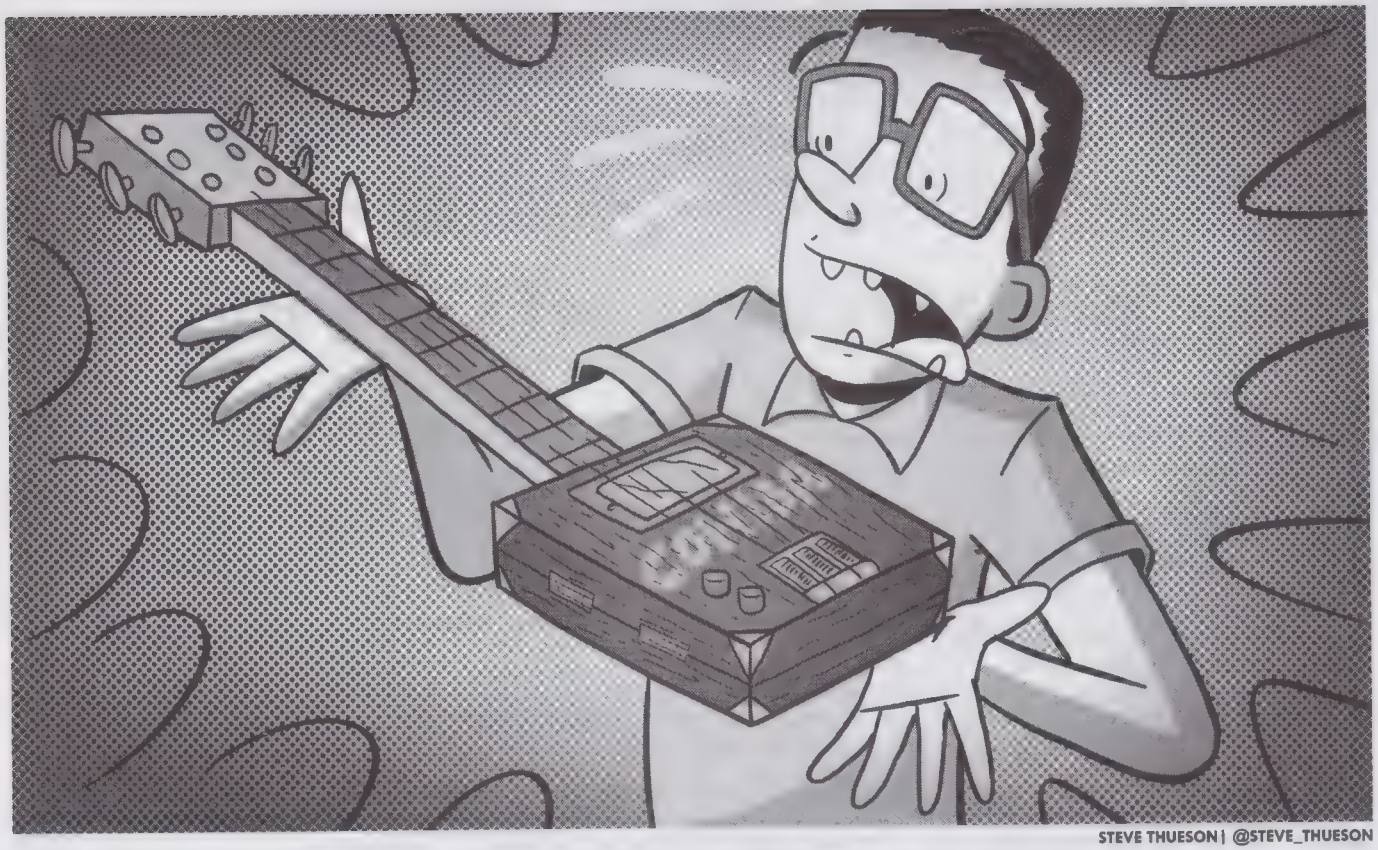
"Punk Rock: It's kind of a piece of crap, but it's cool."

A LIFE LESS FLOONED

I bought a cigar box guitar a while back. I had been idly trying to tune it at the music store, but realized midway through the process that I had no idea how a person would properly tune such an instrument. As a result, the guitar was half-tuned in such a wacked-out fashion that I found it allowed me to play the opening chord to "Throw It Away" by Joe Jackson with a single finger. As a rule, I am generally very pro-anything that I can accomplish with a single finger, so I bought it. In addition to the many hours of enjoyment I have received from single-fingeredly playing the opening chord to "Throw It Away" on this guitar, I have also gained many hours of idle, finger-free pleasure simply by admiring the *craftsmanship* required to create such an instrument. When friends would come over, I would force my cigar box guitar upon them, jabbering excitedly about its construction: "Look, you can see where the person who made it cut a hole in the cigar box *here*, then they took a piece of wood for the neck and cut it so it would fit it in right *there*, then they took another piece of wood and made a fingerboard out of it, and cut parallel notches in it so they could tap metal frets into the notches, then they glued the fretboard piece of wood to the neck piece of wood, and sanded them 'til they were smooth! IT'S A GODDAMNED MINDBLOWER I TELL YOU!" I was fascinated for months with my purchase, turning it over and over, inspecting it this way and that, trying to decipher how exactly this anonymous, maniacal artisan plied their craft, marveling at the ingenuity and resourcefulness of it all. *This nut made a guitar out of a box and some wood and some strings and some pieces of metal! Behold, a savior is born!* I could spend hours just noting the steps one would take in order to craft an instrument of this sort: First, you'd have to cut *here*, then you'd drill *there*. You'd glue *that* and clamp *this*, then sand it all and fit it in *like so*. The more I figured out about it, the more brilliant the whole operation appeared. This bald-faced adoration went on for a few months, until I thrust my axe (if a cigar box guitar can be properly said to qualify as an "axe"—they seem more like the things you use to scrape up old tile off of kitchen floors, or possibly a very elaborate awl) upon one of my more guitar-y friends. I jabbered for a while about the exquisite craftsmanship with which my instrument was so delightfully infected, and awaited his certain effusion of high praise. After inspecting my awl for about ten seconds, he politely replied, "That's cool. It's kind of a piece of crap, but it's cool." *"Piece of crap???"* What, *my* awl??? *Are you serious???* Look at this thing! They cut a hole that's exactly the size of the neck and the neck is a couple of different pieces of wood glued together and they drilled holes and they sanded things so you wouldn't get splinters and *this person made a whole fuckin' guitar out of nothing but wood and wires and strings and some knobs and screws and a pickup and various indeterminate bits of metal and plastic and other random substances!!! IT'S NOTHING SHORT OF A MIRACLE!!!* Unfazed, he simply shrugged and said, "How did you think guitars were *made?*"

This flummoxed me.

Before the Cohibatator™ (so named because it was created from a box which had formerly housed Cohiba® cigars, dee-rect from Santiago La República Dominicana), I had never given a moment's contemplation to how guitars were created. It had never occurred to me that every guitar I own was (I assume?) created by someone cutting *here* and drilling *there* and gluing *that* and clamping *this*. I guess way in the back of my reptilian forebrain, where the minute amount of vestigial musings I've managed to accumulate on such matters are stored well beneath the surface of my consciousness, I probably thought they just came off of an assembly line, like at a GM plant. A mold comes down a conveyor belt, and then a cauldron of molten wood tips out some hazardous sludge into it and a stamper comes down from the ceiling and goes **FLOON!!!** (I always assume most production equipment goes **FLOON!!!** I probably got that idea from a Don Martin comic strip. Actually, I'd be surprised if I didn't) and then some guys in thick white protective jumpsuits and orange visors who look like Flash's enemy Heat Wave come running out with arc welders and sprayers and put some very important finishing touches on it, then it goes into another room where a bunch of ladies who all dress like it's 1942 put the strings on in swift and practiced motions and then it plops off the assembly line into a case and is hauled off in a big canvas dumpster by Noob-Noob. Like I said, I never really thought about it. Yet, the fact remains: Despite that the basic processes that were used to create my beloved Cohibatator™ were also used to create every other guitar I've ever owned, I have never once—*not once*—given even a passing thought to the craftsmanship involved in creating any other instrument *but* the Cohibatator™. Now, sure, I've appreciated other guitars as glossy, colorful, stylish objects of slobber—I've commended them for staying in tune, having a nice tone, or for ease of use—but I've never looked at one and marveled how the neck fit into the body just so, or how the frets were all perfectly parallel to each other, or how the time and energy spent on their finish has all but vanquished the likelihood of me getting a splinter while trying to learn that daunting second note of a two-note solo. The only time I've ever reflected on the craftsmanship of most guitars is in statements like *"fucking piece of shit, what are you falling apart for already?"* and similarly-styled *bon mots*. The craftsmanship is just too significantly advanced for me to admire it *as* craftsmanship. I can only see it as the result of a remote **FLOON!** somewhere off in the distance. My Cohibatator™, however, looks like it could have been crafted by a reasonably skilled high school senior in wood shop. The craftsmanship is primitive enough that I can recognize it for what it is—the person who made it did a good job on it, but it's certainly nothing that I couldn't do myself, given some research, a little practice, and access to the Washington Middle School wood shop. My initial attempts at cobbling together cigar box guitars likely wouldn't be anywhere as good as the Cohibatator™, of course, but if I kept at it for a while, I should eventually be able to at least get close. Who knows? Maybe I could get really good at it, and I'd make one that was even better. Just between you and me, I wouldn't exactly bet the bank on my innate potential for significant achievement in the field of carpentry, but, hey, you never know. My point here is that sufficiently advanced craftsmanship—more often than not assisted by technological implements not readily available to the layman—is essentially indistinguishable from magic. It's all one big **FLOON!** somewhere. For me to really appreciate the craftsmanship of anything, it has to be down at a level where I can get a handle on it, where I have some sense of what has been done, and what



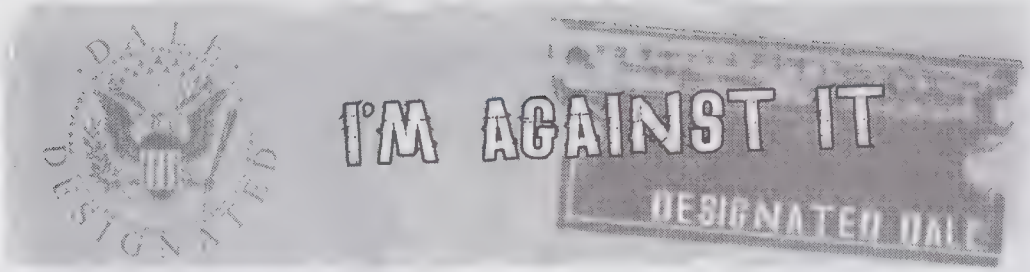
STEVE THUESON | @STEVE_THUESON

Punk rock brought life down to my level, where I could understand what was going on enough to appreciate the craftsmanship involved.

steps I'd need to take to approach a similar quotient of excellence. I need to have *some* clue how to get there from here, otherwise it's all **FLOON!** to me.

I am observing the forty year anniversary of my being "into" punk rock this month. Of all the numerous genies, imps, and djinns that uncorking that particular bottle has unleashed upon my world, one of the most truly useful is punk rock's masterful assistance at navigating me over, around, and through the **FLOON!** of a society where **FLOON!** is more often than not wielded as a weapon, or, at minimum, brandished like a scarecrow to keep the rubes at bay. *Oh, you want to be a rock star? Sorry son, magic things need to drop out of the ceiling and go FLOON! for that to happen. It's an exceedingly complex and esoteric process which is far above your comprehension. Nothing but shame, doom, and social liability await you if you proceed on this course! Turn back! Abandon thy quest! YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT THROUGH THIS INTENSE BOMBARDMENT!* I mean, before I bought that Ramones album, I was listening to Cheap Trick and the Rolling Stones. I love both of those bands to this day, but, at the time, Cheap Trick were busy being mobbed by thousands of screaming and potentially attractive Japanese fans; the Rolling Stones merited their own section of the *Chicago Tribune* Sunday paper simply by dint of deigning to play in town that week. If you're thirteen years old, sitting in your bedroom with a five-dollar acoustic guitar, going TWANK *plink* TOINK *flunk* BWONK and hoping the sounds you're producing can pass for "Louie Louie," there's a rather sizable disconnect there. The tendency is to imagine there's some magical **FLOON!** moment out there, waiting for you (and probably *only* you, because *you're the chosen one! FLOON! gives the other marks a wide berth, but YOU... YOU got potential, buddy-boy!),* and to be bitterly disappointed when no **FLOON**ing comes to pass. My mind boggles when I think of all the people with vastly greater musical abilities than myself who never did anything of significance with their talent *simply because they couldn't figure out how to get to Point B from Point A without some kind of miracle exception granting them divine providence.* People practice guitar for years and still can't figure out how to be in the Rolling Stones, so they pack it in. Twenty months after buying my first punk album, I was up on stage, playing shitty punk rock on a crappy bass. You don't sit around, waiting for **FLOON!**, you might as well be waiting for Godot. You just kinda *do it.* How hard can it be? The Ramones are just four guys standing in front of a brick wall! Punk rock brought life down to my level, where I could understand what was going on enough to appreciate the craftsmanship involved. For forty **FLOON!**-free years, I am truly grateful. To paraphrase my friend, "Punk Rock: It's kind of a piece of crap, but it's cool."

Love,
–Nørb



Whatever, man, pay it forward.

"Hey, pizza! It's great! Let's dig in!"

"Bands like the Ramones don't come around once in a lifetime. They come around once." –Seymour Stein, co-founder of Sire Records

Truer words have never been spoken in regards to one of the most enduring bands in the history of rock'n'roll. When it comes to the Ramones, they're not just one of my favorite bands that have taken permanent residence inside this beating heart of mine over the past three decades. They're one of the few select bands that changed the way I looked at music altogether, literally changed my life. My pal Bobby perfectly put it into perspective some years back during one of our many conversations regarding some of the bigger game-changers in rock'n'roll's timeline: "Dude, the Ramones were our generation's Beatles. We experienced something unlike anything else the first time we heard them and saw them live."

The only bummer is I never got to check out the original lineup with Tommy on the drum kit. I was but a lanky first grader the first time the Ramones rocked a stage here in Los Angeles at The Roxy in 1976, and only eight when Tommy left the drum seat in 1978. I was a bit too young to get my hearing damaged by way of a wall of Marshall and Ampeg amplification… which brings us to the topic of discussion, the film *Rock 'n' Roll High School*, which was theatrically released forty years ago in 1979.

Shot on location around the greater Los Angeles area, this Roger Corman-produced/Allan Arkush-directed classic embodies the Corman trademark goofiness all the while packing a mean punch with some pretty choice live segments from the furious four, although their "acting" parts lean pretty heavily towards goofiness. I think it's a fairly safe assumption if you're reading this, a good majority of you have seen *RNRHS* if not more than a few times, so instead of going into general plot points, I'd like to dig a little bit into the not-so-obvious details, things you may or may have not noticed.

The high school filming locations themselves are interesting, because of the multiple interior and exterior shots, there was actually four different high schools used for filming: one in the North Valley in Van Nuys, two located in the South Bay in El Segundo and Manhattan Beach, and the most recognizable location used to be over on Hoover St. in South Los Angeles, Mount Carmel High School. I say "used to be," because at the end of the movie (SPOILER ALERT), a good chunk of that deserted Mount Carmel school building actually got detonated and destroyed. Lit up on film, if you will.

During my time playing drums with The Controllers some years ago, Kidd Spike (Controllers/Gears) and I would have endless discussions about the Ramones, being he's just as much a true believer as I am. As an extra for the movie, Spike and a grip of others were bussed to Mount Carmel in the middle of the night to get the end scenes slated. Everyone on the set was given a specific heads-up as to when the explosions were happening, so as not to act surprised when everything behind them was going to go off, as well as getting everyone on the same page to get it right the first (and only) time. Not only can you spot a few heads in the crowd turning around when the first round off explosions rip up into the sky, but you can clearly spot Kidd Spike bopping alongside Johnny Ramone while the band's performing "Rock 'n' Roll High School." Spike's the blond cat in a black leather jacket with a white rope noose tied to it. You can't miss 'em.

When the Ramones recorded the three live sets at The Roxy in Hollywood on December 14, 1978, those sets were edited together for the film. Often people will mention spotting Darby Crash (Germs) up against the stage in the movie, and while it's indeed him, directly behind him you can spot Germs bassist Lorna Doom, as well as OG Masque scenester Hellin Killer in front of both. With a watchful eye during the chase scene inside The Roxy, you can also spot the longtime artist and associate of the Ramones Arturo Vega, and the band's actual tour manager Monte Melnick (not the smarmy guy playing their manager in the movie). Bingenheimer and Melnick can also be spotted when the band rolls up in the pink Cadillac convertible (*"Hey, LOOK! It's the Ramonesmobile!"*) outside of the Rockatorium where Riff's camped out to buy tickets. That outside shot of the "Rockatorium" is actually an exterior shot of the beautiful, old Mayan Theater on S. Hill St. in downtown Los Angeles.

One of the more memorable character voices in *RNRHS* was Screamin' Steve Stevens, played to the max by the Los Angeles DJ extraordinaire The Real Don Steele (*"I'm in the book—under Scaaaaa-reamin'!"*) Don Steele was a heavy contender in the L.A. radio DJ scene during the mid-60s on, and played the part of reporter Junior Bruce in one of Corman's all-time film classics, *Death Race 2000*.

I had heard over the years that the Ramones weren't the first choice to be picked for the band/musical interest for *RNRHS*, often hearing about how Todd Rundgren—who had produced the first New York Dolls LP—then Cheap Trick were two of the top choices. Although they ultimately both ended up passing and later on regretting it, I learned that Cheap Trick wasn't the only band that was being courted for the film's inclusion (when it was still tentatively titled *Disco High*…yikes). Others bands that were on the list were Devo, Tom Petty And The Heartbreakers, and even the idea for Van Halen was thrown around. (Heh, good lord, could you imagine that?) When someone mentioned the Ramones to director Allan Arkush, he immediately loved the idea, being he was a big fan, and changed the name of the film to *Rock 'n' Roll High School*. As stressful as it was for a band like the Ramones to be part of a film, the band had even more pressure working on their new record at the same time with the nut job genius, convicted murderer, and accused sexual harasser Phil Spector.

Besides getting my hands on some pretty slick *RNRHS* promotional stuffies over the past years, including an actual movie theater 35mm film trailer, one of my faves is my theater marquee poster with the famous William Stout cartoon artwork, as seen on the movie soundtrack album cover (that was a send-up of the *Animal House* movie poster). Luckily enough, I had an old pal at the time who could professionally frame pieces museum-quality, so I plunked down to have it done up correctly for everyone to enjoy on the wall. About four years ago, someone texted me a link to an eBay auction for the original artwork used for that movie marquee poster and LP cover, figuring I'd be interested in seeing how much it was going for (which I was, but knew something like this would likely be too rich for my blood). It was on auction from the Heritage Auction house here in Los Angeles and noticed that the artist's hand-inscribed information on the

SHANE MILNER | @SJTALSORIAN

"Fuck this," I said to myself

while reading his email, thinking how much of a shitbird someone has to be to steal someone's artwork from the original artist.

back of the piece was blackened out with a Sharpie. Right away, that was a red flag and something didn't seem right. I contacted William Stout personally to ask what the deal was, if he had sold this awhile back and if it was just floating around from auction to auction. He immediately replied back to tell me that it had indeed been stolen and he had been looking for it for decades, noting that his ownership notice was scratched out on back without any notation of him, sale, or transfer.

"Fuck this," I said to myself while reading his email, thinking how much of a shitbird someone has to be to steal someone's artwork from the original artist. So, like any other good Ramones fan, I got on the phone with the auction house. The person in charge immediately thought I was pulling some kind of hustle, getting a bit of an attitude until I told her that the only thing I wanted was to get it back into the hands of the artist who would be contacting her that afternoon, the same artist who it was stolen from. She then gave me a personal number for William to call her back at and they took it from there. It kind of baffled me that it took a total stranger to tip off a guy who had been looking for a piece of his stolen work for years, that not a single one of his art buddies sent him that auction house link for something as high profile at that piece, a link that was on eBay, for chrissakes. Whatever, man, pay it forward.

Happy 40th, Roger and Allan!
From all us fans everywhere!

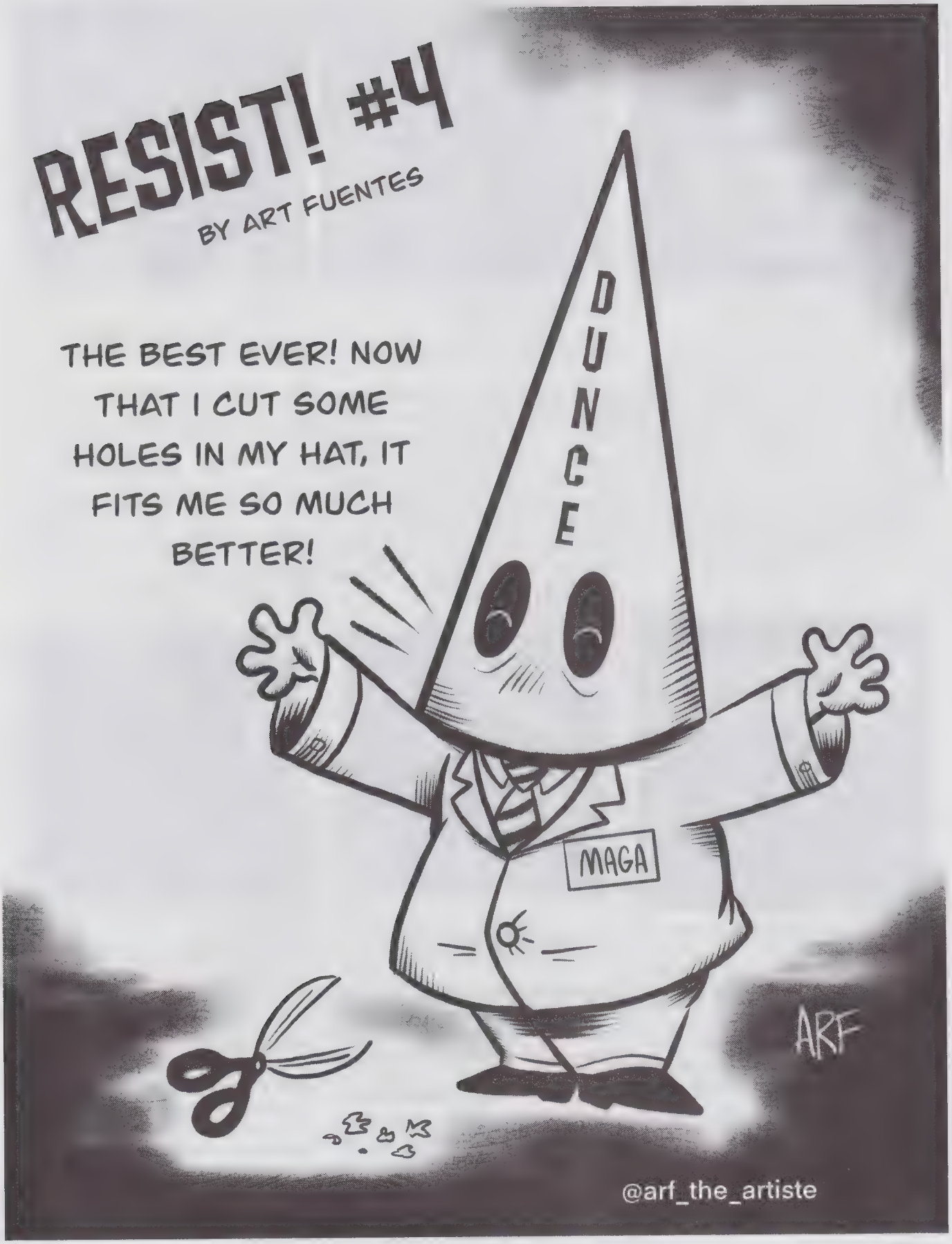
–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

Dan Monick's Photo Page

Soundset 19 / St. Paul, MN / May 16, 2019

RESIST! #4

BY ART FUENTES



United Snakes EP
Limited Edition 7"

United Snakes is a collaboration between Jordon Joyes, singer songwriter of American Punk/ Bluegrass outfit Gallows Bound and Canadian singer, songwriter, Chuck Coles of The Creep Show / Organ Thieves.
Their captivating writing styles, strong vocals, and acoustic melodies blend together seamlessly.

Screaming at Traffic
I Don't Like Sports
Limited Edition of 250

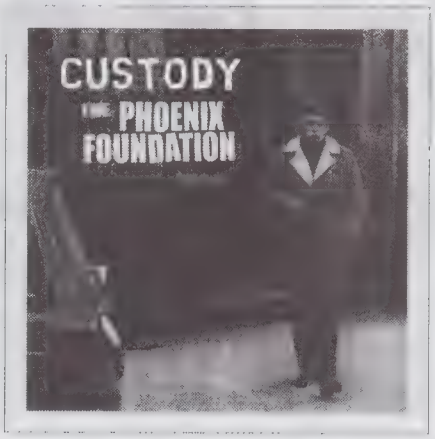
Debut album from the newest Punk Rock Cosmonauts to join Little Rocket Records. Screaming At Traffic from Winnipeg, Mb, Canada, are made up of Jacques Richer, Duncan Murta, Paul Colman, and Stefan St. Godard. Their no-frills emo-punk riffing add to the group's frenzied live performance and raw, yet melodic songwriting.

DL Burdon
The Wind Told The Runaway
Limited Edition of 300

DL Burdon's 2nd full length LP from the Former Cell Mates front man, with contributions from members of Hyde & Beast, The Lake Poets, and Futureheads front man Barry Hyde. Burdons' songwriting has mature into a more classic, timeless direction whilst his live shows still retain the spontaneity and excitement of his punk rock background.

Dave Smalley & The Bandoleros
Join The Outsiders
Limited Edition Tri-Color or Blue Splatter on Milky White Vinyl

Dave Smalley, the legendary punk rock singer (DYS, All, Dag Nasty, Down By Law) has a new band Formed in 2017, Mr. Smalley has united with The Bandoleros, three Spanish guys, and one crazy Argentinian to create 11 solid punk rock hits.
Join the outsiders.



Custody / The Phoenix Foundation
Limited Edition Split 7"

Custody is back with a sing-a-long track about making songs every Tuesday - treating us to those catchy choruses we've come to know and love.
The Phoenix Foundation's 'Secrets' is a brooding six minutes of emotional punk rock, blending the perfect balance of roughness and poignancy.

Mean Caesar EP
Limited Edition Black Vinyl.
One Side Screenprinted with Yellow Logo

Mean Caesar's debut EP deals with London's darker side and personal loss, attaining nosebleed-reaching dimensions. The band proves their punk mastery while retaining all of their raw, buzzed- out power.

LITTLE ROCKET RECORDS
littlerocketrecords.bandcamp.com

Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

My niece Julia was twenty-three years old; so vibrant, loving, and bright. She had empathy and love for everyone she met. She took on the weight of the world and felt everything.

I wonder if she had just thought to make a call for help in the middle of that night, maybe, just maybe, she'd still be here. Just a phone conversation with someone she'd never met who had been in her exact place before. Someone who understood Julia's situation and who she could have shared anything with. Someone trained to just listen, to take it all in, and help talk Julia down.

But instead, all alone, Julia gave up everything that night. And in that instant we lost her. We were all also forever changed.

Emergency lines are set up to talk you down from a decision you can never come back from. Just one call: the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255

PURO PINCHE POETRY Y CUENTOS

EDITED BY EVER VELASQUEZ AND EUGENIA NICOLE

"Find your purpose or you wastin air"

In Their Own Words

The Watts Poets on their friend and fellow poet Efren Almaraz

Efren Almaraz was born on August 20, 1999. He was a poet and athlete who loved sneakers, hip hop, and the Dodgers. He was incredibly smart. He graduated from the College Bridge Academy of Watts in 2017, and began attending San Francisco State University. He then took a break from school to help out his family. This past April he was picking his little sister up from soccer practice when he was shot by a white man from Texas. After his friends and family said goodbye, Efren gave the gift of life to others by donating his organs, leaving this earthly realm on April 23, 2019.

These are the facts about his life, but this is how we students remember him:

Retro Jordans, The Dodgers and Kendrick Lamar
That was E's type of fashion
An attraction to good vibes
He made us laugh and cry at the same time
He was a giver
always give you the bigger piece
he didn't mind getting the least
He kept a smile even when you'd fumble
He showed everyone how to be humble
He was everyone's person
literally a friend from the freshman to the seniors
And he never left out any teachers
He encouraged all us dreamers
He represented PRIDE
Uplifted the weaker
He was a leader 100
His sisters' keeper
He was our activist
Going thru problems of his own and still
willing to be a strategist
Sharing with us that there is a way
And if we don't go to college it's still okay
Success is EVERYWHERE
"Find your purpose or you wastin air"
They Tried to Bury Us; They Didn't

–By the @wattspoets

One Big Cycle
(not implied about anyone in particular)

when a relative or a close friend dies

in a place like Watts
you don't see grown men cry
they get strapped up
make a few calls
go do a job
tell the homies later tonight
get your shit right
"we going hunting"
and there you wait for them like sitting ducks

because they always go back home
that's mistake number one
pull up to their front door with the AK
or a sawed off not even tucked

guns brandished with no remorse
not even thinking by that point in time

how many more families you'll scar for life
nothing else matters because you're looking for revenge
swearing on the homie's grave he'll be avenged
after that it's only a matter of time
before you get caught up for the crime
because you left casings of the bullets you forgot to wipe

like the tears you never cried
because you were not in the right mind
now you're incarcerated with 25 to life
for the murder of a mother with 3 kids

Little Jose and Juan
and their older brother Pedro
the one that Maria despises
because he's a cholo "that's no son of mine"
each time you meet someone in prison
they ask you "what you in for?"
you say I'm IN for innocent
it was the other side of me
the side that nobody can see

it was the voice of the demon in my head
"he just killed your friend, you gonna let him walk away?"
now you're on the inside

on the outside Pedro's homies caught a glimpse
someone talked and you were not there to warn them
they go after the family you left unprotected

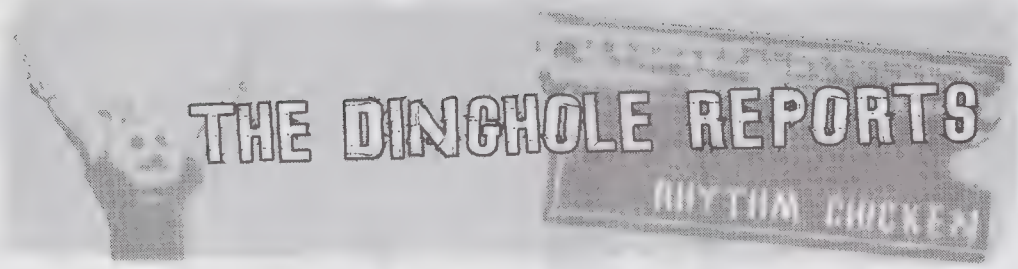
it's all one big cycle
your homies see who did it
come to visit you in prison
"Your mother's dead, man! That vato's homies did it"
and because you're too blind to see
you send a hit on their family
perpetuating the cycle
of grown men who leak bullets
instead of tears

–Efren Almaraz

This is part one of a three-part in memory of series for Efren Almaraz and Nipsey Hussle in collaboration with the Watts Poets @wattspoets and Puro Pinche Poetry.

Special thanks to guest editor hermana Maria Carmier @jambalayamami

ROQUE TORRES | @ROQUEOFMTB



If I wanted new music in my car, I had to record it onto cassette.

Shifting Formats

When I was around thirteen my sister moved off to college and gave me her bedroom stereo. It was made by Sears, where our mom worked and got a discount. It had silver plastic on the front with cool backlighting for finding your AM or FM position on the dial. There was a cassette player on the far left and a record player on the top. The radio dial was always at 91.5 FM, WGBW, the local college station. The tape player was always ready to record the punk rock show on Thursday nights and play it back the rest of the week. The record player got more and more use as my record collection grew. This dumpy Sears stereo was an epicenter to my home life through my teens.

During my college years I spent less and less time at home and more time on the Green Bay city busses going to campus, then to work, and then back home. On the bus I was constantly plugged into my walkman cassette player. For that point in my life cassettes were the most convenient way for me to take in music. My cassette player was *always* with me. Not surprisingly, my cassette collection eventually outgrew my record collection. During my college years, however, there was an interesting new format taking the country by storm, the compact disc. Around this time I started working for Timebomb Tom at the local record store. I watched the cassette section of the store steadily shrink while the CD section grew rapidly.

Towards the end of my college years (*ahem*... all eight of them), I acquired a car from one of my brothers. It was an '85 Toyota Corolla hatchback that only had an AM/FM radio. Now that I had a car, I didn't have to ride the city bus everywhere anymore. My cassette player got used less and less while I chose to scan the oldies stations on my car radio. WGBW, an incredibly awesome college station for many years, was by that time sold to Wisconsin Public Radio. The local oldies stations were the only tolerable radio option, believe me. I had milk crates of cassettes collecting dust in my basement for as long as I had that car.

During those years I became well aware of the various playlists of all the local oldies stations and found them to be acceptable driving music. While not in my car, I was usually listening to CDs at work and at home. I'm not sure when it happened, but that old Sears stereo eventually got replaced with a fancy newer cheapo stereo with a CD player. I regularly hauled a case of CDs between work and home, making sure I had a good healthy rotation of music in my daily life. Working at a record store meant my CD collection was getting out of control. CDs and records were my preferred home music while the cassettes continued collecting dust.

My beloved '85 Toyota Corolla, my oldies-channel assault vehicle died. My next car had an amazing upgrade in the audio department! During the peak of compact disc popularity, I bought a car with a cassette player! This was a drastic shift in my musical enjoyment for many years. Luckily, I had a well-preserved time capsule of dusty old tapes in my basement! I got reacquainted with all that great cassette music from twelve years prior. Hearing all those old songs brought back memories of endless hours on the city bus, but now I was driving my own car! I didn't have to follow the bus routes and I also didn't have to listen to the radio! I had my own cassettes of music and I chose where my car went! It also kind of felt like musical time travel. Every couple weeks I dusted off another four or five cassettes from those milk crates.

During this era, many people had early CD players in their cars and they always skipped. Every bump made enjoying your favorite CDs more and more difficult. With my car's cassette player, however, I aimed for the potholes and cranked plenty of skip-free punk rock from twelve years prior! My compact disc collection stopped growing and got used less and less. My Saturn had a cassette player. My Mitsubishi had a cassette player. For many, many years I was entrenched in the cassette music of yesteryear. During this time, if I wanted new music in my car, I had to record it onto cassette.

Somewhere in all of this musical format swapping I decided to move to Poland. For traveling to the other side of the planet it seemed logical to bring a CD travel folder which held 120 of my favorite discs. I had a tiny boombox CD player which played plenty of CDs at first, but soon I discovered the joys of Polish radio. Radio Krakow was my new WGBW. Their nightly radio shows were amazingly varied and the music was endlessly interesting. I suddenly found myself buying cassettes and taping off the radio again just like when I was in my early teens! Those CDs I brought soon started collecting dust.

Then I moved back to Milwaukee. Then I moved back to northern Wisconsin. Then I moved *back to Poland.* Then I moved back to northern Wisconsin. Then I moved to Las Vegas. Then I moved back to northern Wisconsin. In all of this moving, I somehow ceased to own a home stereo. For a good while my records, cassettes, and compact discs collected dust until I finally settled down and committed to staying in Wisconsin. For awhile my only CD player was my laptop. It's kind of difficult to fully realize the rock majesty of the Riverboat Gamblers through the tiny speakers of my laptop computer.

My first couple years of running my soup shop here in northern Wisconsin, I only played CDs with a crappy thrift store CD boombox hooked up to the shop's sound system. Eventually, the CDs took up too much space and didn't last too long in a food service environment. I finally had to get with the times and just start streaming music while hijacking my neighbor's wi-fi. The day I started streaming music with my tiny iPod touch, I moved about four hundred CDs back into my basement. That cleared up some much-needed storage space under my soup counter and the business ran better. Also, I wasn't constantly changing CDs and getting frustrated when CDs skipped because of soup splatter and grease smudges.

So here I am in 2019. Mrs. Hen and I have a sturdy old classroom record player from the '60s in our living room at home. While much of my record collection is still collecting dust in storage, we have really been enjoying listening to the vinyl we acquire from the ninety-nine cent bins! Face it, the price of new vinyl these days sure makes those cheapo bins sound better and better. Most evenings we prepare and enjoy dinner to the sounds of Hank Williams Sr., ABBA, various oddball polka records, Gene Krupa, or that Looney Toons album.

Nowadays I've been driving a 2006 Scion XB. This car has a considerably well-functioning CD player... and I think it is the only CD player I own! Heck, laptops don't even have disc drives anymore! While driving home tonight I marveled at how I only have this one CD player, which happens to be on wheels, and how I currently have just four CDs in my car: *Black Monk Time* by The Monks, *After the Lights Go Out* by Channel 3, *Oh Good Grief* by Vince Guaraldi, and *Abdication...for Your Love* by Reigning Sound. This particular Reigning Sound album was originally recorded for the music-production arm of the Scion corporation, so

LAURA COLLINS | @LAURACOLLINSART

With my car's cassette player, however, I aimed for the potholes and cranked plenty of skip-free punk rock from twelve years prior!

it's fitting that it supply the soundtrack for the toaster on wheels I call my car.

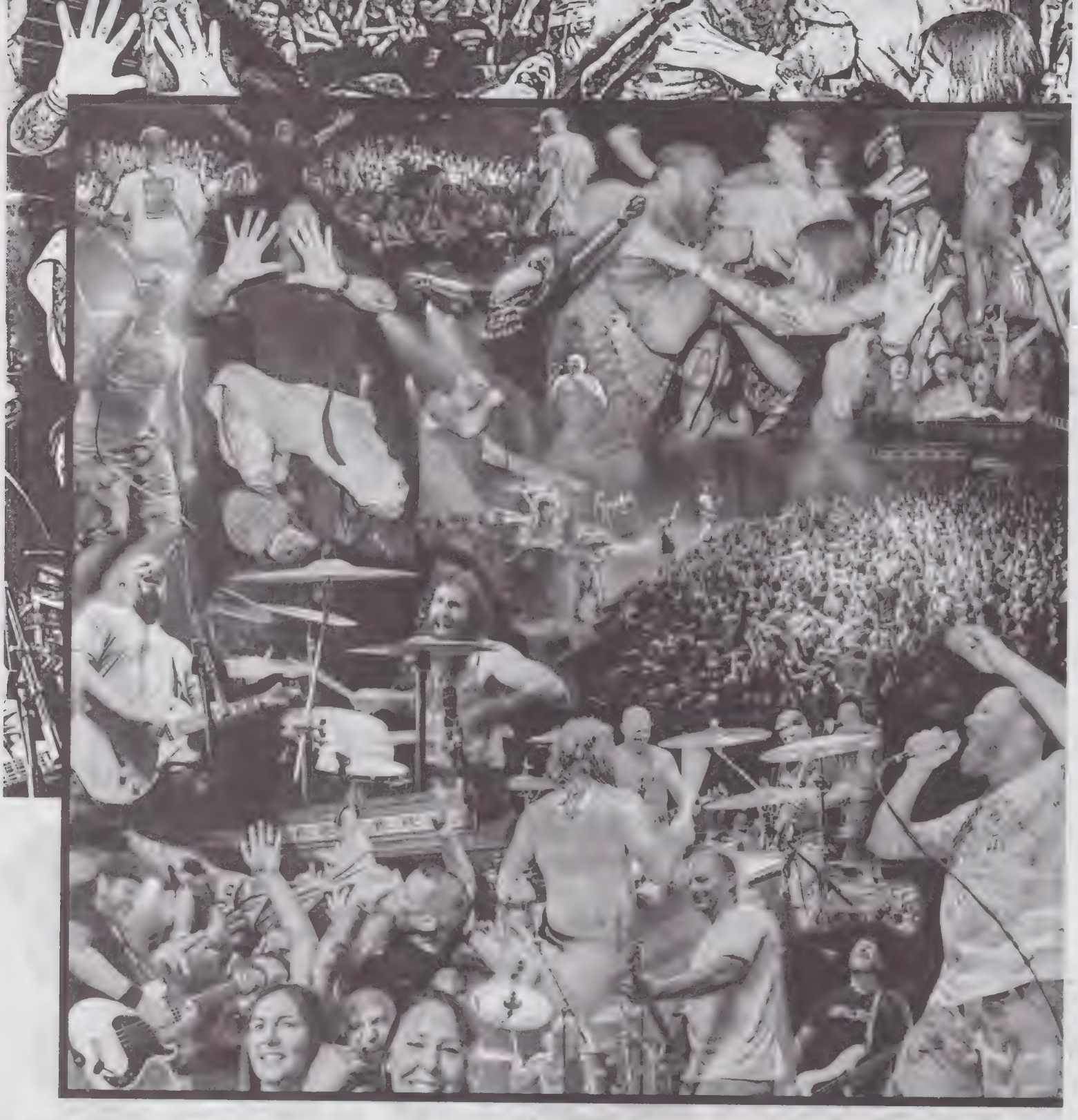
Thinking back to when I was a spry teenager excitedly listening to the punk rock on WGBW, I sure got upset when Wisconsin Public Radio bought out the station and there was no more punk rock radio in Green Bay. Now I've got a meager four CDs in my car, and more often than not those CDs are collecting dust on the dashboard because I'm listening to... *gulp*... public radio.

Sadly enough, I never got into 8-tracks.

Dinghole Report #173 Another Year, Another Parade.....*sigh* (Rhythm Chicken sighting #736)

Yup, another Fourth of July in Baileys Harbor, Wis. Again, we had the famous Freddy K's tractor pulling Freddy K's manure spreader through the parade. Again, the Rhythm Chicken decorated the crap-flinging blades on the back end with freshly emptied beer cans. Again, we crept through the quaint small town festival as the Rhythm Chicken madly pounded out another maniacal performance with a belly full of Blatz. Again, the crowds ate it up and went wild. Candy was thrown to the kids. Beer offerings were brought up to the Chicken's rolling throne. Happy Birthday, America. Your president is a bad joke.

–Rhythm Chicken



Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column

Chris Boarts Larson, slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce

The Avail Reunion

Many hoped—but most knew—the unlikelihood of an Avail reunion. Tickets for Avail's first show in over a decade sold out less than ten seconds after going on sale. A second show was added and sold out almost as fast. Celebrating twenty-one years since the release of Over the James, the excitement and anticipation for the Avail reunion was unreal.

It was over a hundred degrees in Richmond that weekend. People traveled from afar. Many arrived without tickets, just hope. It was all a bit nuts, really. I think it's safe to say all expectations were exceeded. Ultimately, it was what everyone hoped it would be—it was like jumping in a time capsule, as if twenty years had not passed.

The energy was unbelievable. Avail took the stage and the place erupted! Everyone was so happy, excited, ecstatic, and stoked. It was all so overwhelmingly positive! For many, it was a reunion for old friends to see Avail "just one more time!" For many, it was a chance they thought they'd never have—a wish and a dream come true—to finally see Avail live.

Richmond does love Richmond, and this was very much a local hometown RVA celebration with all local bands. The first night started with Asylum and Iron Reagan, the second with Nosebleed and Down To Nothing. Both nights were equally amazing and unique. Seeing the smiling faces, young and old, appreciating and representing the past and the present, sharing this all with my son (who really didn't get it until he was in the middle of it), seeing old friends, and their kids, and sharing in all the stories, both before and after. What a weekend!

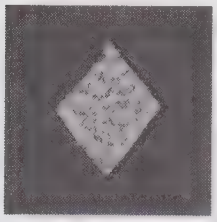
Hearing those anthemic hardcore punk songs once again was perfection! If it wasn't for Avail I would have never ended up in Richmond. It is amazing just how many of those "If it wasn't for Avail..." stories there are!

Thank you! Thank you RVA! Thank you Avail!

–Chris Boarts Larson
slugandlettuce.net
facebook.com/SlugandLettuce

SWEET JAP
Japanese punk rock on one-sided LP, Cherry Red vinyl

BASEBALL FURIES - ALL AMERICAN PSYCHO
Repressed on Red, White and Blue vinyl



FIRE HEADS
Madison, garage, punk, smackdowns

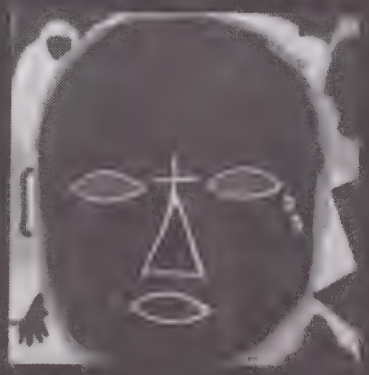
WOOD CHICKENS
Meat Puppets meet the Minutemen!

COMING 2019

Gino and The Goons - LP/CD
Facility Men - LP/CD
Fatal Figures - LP/CD
Fireheads/Sex Scenes - Split LP
Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb - Fake Nature LP/CD
Brain Bagz/Bloodbags - Split LP

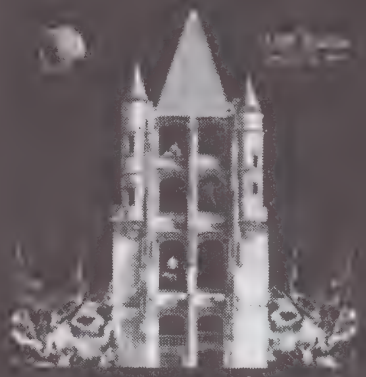
BIG NECK records

NOW AVAILABLE



RICHARD VAIN - NIGHT JAMMER LP/CD
Ex-Ponys, Chicago rock, psych, wall of sound

WHITE SAVAGE/FOOTBALL split LP
Ex-Baseball Furies, Ponys, and Guilty Pleasures creating chaotic punk



LOST SOUNDS - MEMPHIS IS DEAD LP
Repressed on 180 gram and Smokey Clear vinyl!

WOOD CHICKENS - WELL DONE LP/CD
More punk than ever before!

DUMB VISION - MODERN THINGS LP/CD
Madison, WI super group

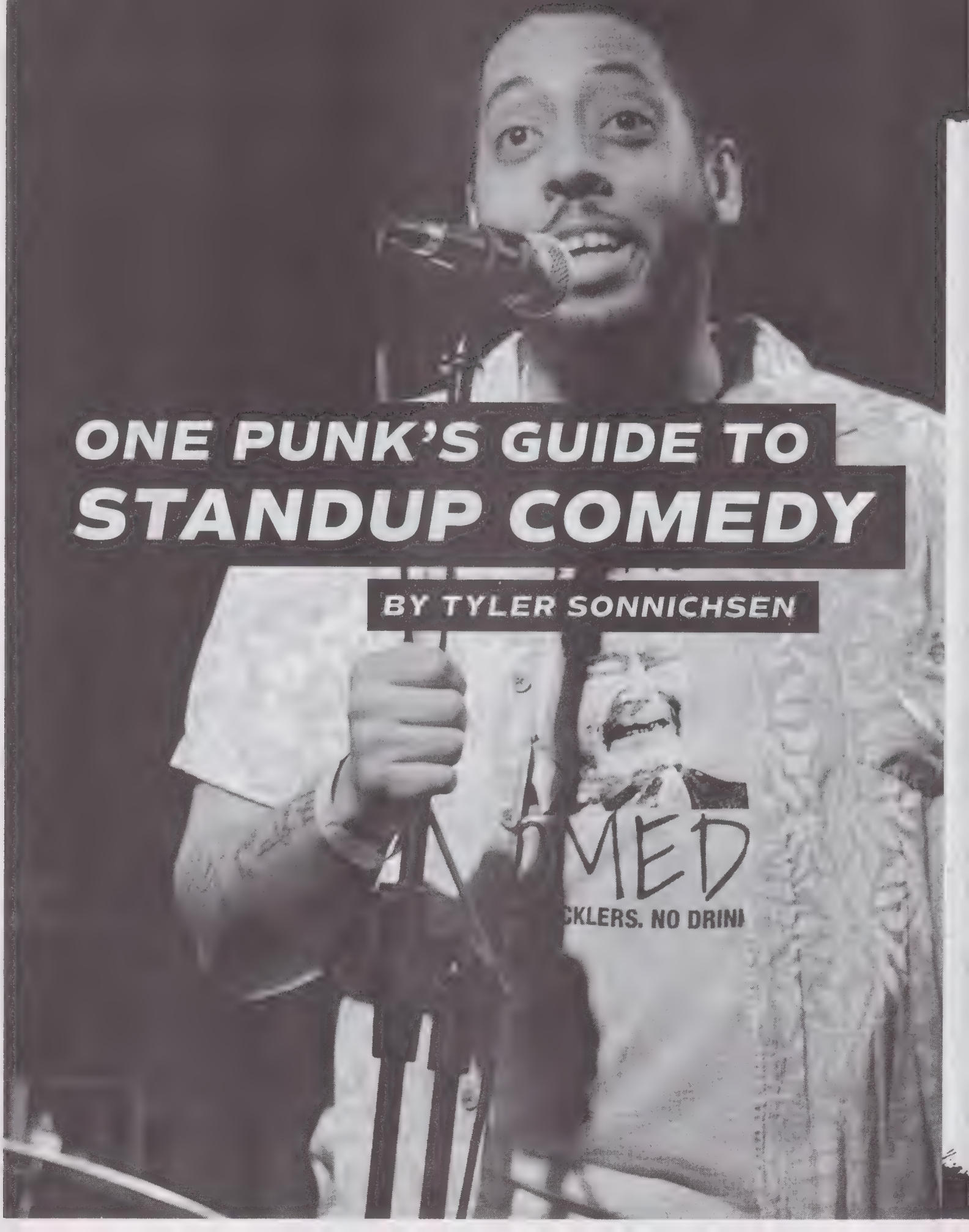
TWIN GUNS - IMAGINARY WORLDS LP
NYC guitar and drum gods.

GALLERY NIGHT - I WANNA DIE HERE 7"
Milwaukee noise punk behemoths

BIG NECK RECORDS

13731 Old Springhouse Ct
Lovettsville, VA 20180
bigneckrecords.com
bigneckrecords@usa.net

JAMES SPOONER'S
NO FUN
ENCORES
ENCORES ARE A SOCIAL CONTRACT. BANDS PLAY A SET, WE WANT MORE AND WITH HUMILITY THEY COME BACK TO PLAY A SONG OR TWO. IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SPONTANEOUS!
THANK YOU GOOD NIGHT!
THAT'S THE AGREEMENT.
WTF! THEY DIDN'T PLAY THEIR BEST SONGS!
frail
SET LIST
Fun song
Song you like
Ok song
Cover song we all know
Good stuff
CROWD FAVORITE
Biggest song
ENCORES
BUT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINES BANDS STARTED PLANNING ENCORES.
EVEN PUNK BANDS!
STAGE LIGHTS STILL OFF
STAGE MUSIC HASN'T STARTED
NO ONE IS BREAKING DOWN INSTRUMENTS.
ENCORE.
AND WE FOLLOWED SUIT.
ONE MORE SONG!
ONE MORE SONG!
OH COME ON! ARE WE REALLY DOING THIS CHARADE!
CLEARLY THEY ARE COMING BACK!
frail
PUNK ROCK STARTED AS A REACTION TO THIS ROCK STAR BULLSHIT!
frail
OH YOU'RE BACK. BIG SURPRISE.
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE SPONTANEOUS!
IT'S RUINED.
frail
COME ON DANCE WITH ME!
J. SPOONER 19'
@SPOONERSNOFUN


ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO
STANDUP COMEDY
BY TYLER SONNICHSEN
CKLERS. NO DRINI

Kevin Tit hosting Punkhouse Comedy in Washington DC. Photo by TJ Ferguson.

It was a late night in March 2018. Sean Simoneau and I sat in our rental car outside of a White Castle on the periphery of Cincinnati, devouring drive-thru food, dreading the four-hour drive home, and recounting the our recently ended tour. As comics are predisposed, we dwelled on the negatives before arriving at the net positives. We had an epiphany: Over the previous six nights, we'd done six different kinds of shows in six different kinds of venues. We'd co-headlined at a house show in Indianapolis, the back of a hipster BBQ joint in Pittsburgh, a cavernous sports bar with a stage perched above the bar in Cleveland (well, Lakewood), the basement of a college pub in Kent, the back of a pizza place in Columbus, and a showcase at Go Banana's Comedy Club in Cincinnati (well, Montgomery). No two of these shows felt terribly similar in tone or composition, but it still felt like a solid tour by our standards. We made a little money, met some funny and talented people, and even bumped into Hot Snakes at our hotel in Cleveland. That was neat.

Standup comedy is difficult to write about because it's an art form that can be so many things to so many people. Some view it as an admirable art and an essential outlet; others see it as vocal noise pollution for the self-indulgent. It stems from the world's oldest form of entertainment (one performer saying insightful things to a captive audience), yet seems among the least respected. Standup suffers from the widest gap between insider and outsider perceptions, exacerbated by an internet noise machine that builds echo chambers and convinces comics the "general public" or "civilians" think about this shit the same way we do. It's perpetually exhausting and at times infuriating.

The last time standup comedy was a genuinely lucrative proposition in the United States, an army of vultures swept in, homogenized, and mass-marketed standup into an ossified iconography that it still shoulders today. If you don't already know what I'm talking about, try to sit through the cavalcade of garbage on *An Evening at the Improv* (1982-1996). For every brilliant young comic on there, there were five Seinfeld rip-offs who got through with zero risks and even less charisma. It almost felt like a growing club system and growing financial spoils for people on the periphery of the art diluted the quality of what was easily available and elevated less scrupulous performers with less substance to higher levels of success. If you're a punk musician or DIY practitioner who feels like a lot of what you've read so far sounds familiar… well, it should.

Speaking personally, my comedy career (If you can call it that) has been much more influenced by punk than any mainstream comedy "industry." I have been fortunate to perform with some legends and make reasonable side-hustle money telling jokes and producing shows over the years. More importantly, I've developed lifelong friendships with people of diverse backgrounds and in various places within the standup world.

In this guide I'm going to talk about the myriad overlaps between DIY punk and standup—the struggle between art and commerce, platforms and mechanisms for representation and resistance, and how one has enriched the other over our lifetimes. I'll also be talking to several hard-working, thoughtful, and punk-influenced comedians. Rather than list and review their albums, I'll let the comics' insights do the talking. Do look up anybody who contributed quotes to this article; they have my endorsement as "cool and very funny." I apologize in advance for also calling attention to a handful of problematic industry juggernauts, but this is necessary in illustrating why standup comedy needs a punk/DIY ethos.

HOW TO DO STANDUP
(Or, How to Build a Good Comedy Scene That Will Make Everyone Better)

"The live experience of sitting in a venue and laughing in the moment with other humans is something that can't be replicated via watching Netflix. The live show is, always was, and always will be 'the thing.'" –JT Habersaat (Austin)

One facet of standup that is simultaneously great and disappointing is the lack of necessary upfront investment. Because open mics have little barriers to entry, standup provides an outlet for many people who, to quote my friend/Knoxville comic Todd Lewis, "are in it for a certain kind of attention." When particular venues don't provide that ego boost or immediate gratification, some comics make excuses, exclusively performing in rooms that pat them on the back, or simply finding better uses of their time. While I am encouraging comics and fans to use punk as an inspiration to defy gatekeepers and create their own stories, remember that nobody is above the judgment of an audience. Laughter is a great equalizer here.

Despite inevitable issues with quality that come with standup's thin barrier of entry, there are myriad ways that comics and fans can use that for good. If you want to tell jokes, you have opportunities to do so. If you want to earn respect, recognize that you're going to have to help build a scene. Of course standup comedy owes much more to punk rock in DIY ethics than most give it credit for. As with punk, the best spaces for live comedy are places devoted to experimentation and

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inclusivity. Not to denigrate the accomplishments of Roast Battling comics, but I've never gotten joy out of watching a performer punch down with their jokes or ruin an audience member's night. Interactivity is one of standup's great strengths, but in the hands of an inexperienced or thoughtless comic, it can lead to disaster. Also, though I don't write many "dirty" jokes personally, I'll gladly put in writing that enforced "clean comedy" is for sociopaths. Performers can say whatever they want, but they also need to take responsibility.

Given standup's ostensible universality, it's hardly shocking when disgruntled musicians get into it. On paper, it seems much easier than being in a band. Standup requires no temperamental bandmates, no splitting two hundred dollars four-plus ways, no hauling heavy equipment. All you have to do is tell jokes, right? Pragmatically, playing music does have dynamic advantages over comedy. Unless you're an acoustic act working out new solo material, a loud drunk in the crowd won't ruin your set. People who go to bars to hang out with their friends don't always get mad upon discovering there's a band playing. You can perform material that somebody else wrote, with impunity. Certainly, there are numerous similarities, but the fields are differently shaped and the goalposts are at different points.

"There is something for everyone out there," the L.A.-based comic (and avowed ska fan) Brandie Posey wrote to me recently. "Comedy isn't just a dude in a backwards baseball cap calling his girlfriend a bitch anymore—there are legitimately genres of standup even though we don't divide comics up like that yet. DIY spaces have made comedy so much more diverse, and we're all better for it."

One Venn diagram overlap between music and comedy I don't believe the general public has yet grasped is that both exist within a multitude of genre-worlds. The Rolling Stones' fans didn't take kindly to Prince (to put it lightly) when he opened for them in the *Emotional Rescue/Dirty Mind* era. You wouldn't have put Moss Icon in front of Bon Jovi fans in 1989, so why should you expect an experimental underground comic to open for some catch-phrase comic in 2019? Even though the conduits through which we receive entertainment and performers' niches are splintering exponentially today, audiences and promoters still hold standup in the light as this monolithic culture industry, which isn't fair to anyone.

Comedy, like many corners of the punk world, is dominated by hetero cis white men. Fortunately, as one witnesses in many punk scenes, many of those men are acknowledging their privilege and working constructively to book more non-male, LGBT+, and non-white comics for local shows as well as encouraging more diversity within their own scene. Unfortunately, many attempts to foster a supportive space will result in indignation from comics of all ages with Bill Hicks Disease. For example, no sooner had the Sea Tea Comedy Theater in Hartford canceled their monthly open mic due to rampant homophobic, racist, and classist "jokes," that a flood of shitty, old, predominantly white comics voiced opinions nobody asked for regarding "censorship" and "political correctness ruining comedy."

Here is my articulate counterpoint: fuck that shit. To borrow from Whiskey Bear Comedy founder Dustin Meadows, "political correctness isn't killing comedy. Unfunny, shitty comedians are killing comedy." The type of person who complains George Carlin wouldn't have succeeded in today's atmosphere completely miss the point of Carlin's comedy and speaking truth to power in general.

"PC culture isn't killing comedy," wrote Chill Parents singer/guitarist Kevin Tit, who runs monthly Punkhouse Comedy shows in D.C.. "A comedian has every right to say whatever they want while they're on stage and the audience has just as much of a right to groan or walk away if they don't like it. A bad joke does not deserve a positive response." Similarly, many topics commonly understood as "controversial" were well established decades ago, long before people could make jokes publicly behind the veil of Twitter or Reddit. Today, many renditions of jokes that might have constituted blue or gallows humor sixty years ago are simply tired. Finding fresh angles on differences between races and genders is especially difficult, which makes it even more remarkable when somebody does it well. "When people are really good, it looks and it feels so effortless as you watch and listen," said Louisville comic and promoter Reed Sedgwick, "As you improve, you start to understand, in a sort of heightened reality, how people are reacting, how you are playing with it, how to fuck with a heckler without alienating the room, and, somehow, how to be in the moment with words you've said many times before. That's like flying. There's nothing like it. But it's just not as easy as it looks."

HOW TO PRODUCE STANDUP COMEDY

"Finding new comedians can be like finding new bands. And if you find someone you really like, reach out and tell them! Hell, throw a show for them and bring them to your town! Comedy is hard and there isn't much money in it until you hit a certain level. Letting someone know you appreciate their work goes a long way." –Brandie Posey (Los Angeles)

"Breweries are saving comedy," Alex Price told me over lunch last year in Indianapolis, his home base where he books showcases and runs mics under the banner of Let's Comedy. Price, many other comics in our thirties, and I have found kindred spirits in upstart brewers in mid-size cities looking to bring in special events. Some breweries, like Sisyphus in downtown Minneapolis, are founded by people with standup experience. Generally, though, breweries are a major component of the twenty-first century service economy that have been a boon for standup over the past decade.

This opportunity creates a conundrum, though. Too many comedy shows have been started by people who had no idea what they are doing. Before Shane Rhyne and I started a monthly first Friday show at Saw Works Brewing in 2015, there had been two unsuccessful attempts to host standup there. Taking that into consideration, we met with the owner and manager, had an honest discussion about what we needed in order to make the show work (e.g. guaranteed money to pay the performers, help with promotion, replacing all tables in the space with rows of chairs all facing the stage), and got moving.

Lukas McCrary at Summer Fling comedy house show in Knoxville, Tenn. Photo by Jeffrey Chastain.

The reality is—in producing live comedy, as in producing music under a DIY infrastructure—you need to focus on word-of-mouth, building a brand, and maintaining a high quality. "If somebody comes to your show and they love it, they'll tell a friend," Rhyne likes to say, "and if they hate it, they'll tell a hundred." Never forget this while you ponder giving your edge-lord friend a spot or booking your significant other on every show just to be nice. Other comics will know and talk. More importantly, your audience isn't getting the show for which they're spending their money and time.

Just like musicians, comics have been turning back the clock and going underground in equal measures to create platforms for their most innovative work.

"Before comedy, my first love was punk and ska music," wrote Brandie Posey, "I always want to keep that feeling of camaraderie and posi good times in my jokes and shows that I loved so much in my music growing up."

"Twenty-five-year-olds don't want to pay thirty-five bucks on a night out to see a forty-five-year-old entertain fifty-five-year-olds so a sixty-five-year-old can buy a new car," echoes Louisville comic Dan Alten, "I think a lot of young people have been turned off of live comedy because the money for comedy clubs isn't in entertaining young folks who are usually broke, so there's a big gap in live comedy options."

Alten, who authored the zine *How to Make a Standup Comedy Show at Home with Your Friends* in 2018, has been collaborating with Louisville comics in building a pillar for the Midwest's flourishing underground scene. Though Chicago remains the juggernaut, smaller cities have been proving time and again how many great audiences and great comics are emerging from the middle of the country. Indianapolis, as bands like Zero Boys established in the '80s, has proven to be one under-the-radar hotbed of activity via cohorts like Let's Comedy and Rocketship Comedy. Columbus, Ohio (my longtime comedy home away from home) has been a great comedy community as well. The Whiskey Bear Comedy Festival, helmed by Ohioans Dustin Meadows, Nickey Winkelman, Lisa Berry, Pat Deering, and Tom Plute, has been a blast for the last few years, importing a diverse crop of comics to perform and network. Deering has also, along with Amber Falter, spearheaded Stand Up for Choice, a massively successful monthly benefit for abortion access in central Ohio.

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS ISN'T KILLING COMEDY. UNFUNNY, SHITTY COMEDIANS ARE KILLING COMEDY.

"Attaching a show to a cause is a great way to make money for grassroots efforts in your area," said Reed Sedgwick, "I suggest if you go this route, don't look for a big national organization, but something important to people in your town. That way, you get local support in promoting and producing, and you are doing tangible good in your own community. When I raised money for a trans health center here in Louisville, it was a great time, and the organization I supported really got people out. These were people who would hardly ever normally come to a comedy show, too. Exposing new people to live comedy really feels good."

People with experiences putting on good punk shows have many of the tools necessary to build good comedy shows. It's vital to remember you don't have to be a comic yourself to bring a comic you like to your town! If there's somebody you enjoy who is out of your price range, look around for people who've opened for them or label-mates. It may surprise you how accessible comics can be when you make quality stage time available.

Any living room up to a tiny punk dive up to Radio City Music Hall has the potential to host a great show that people may be talking about for decades. Case in point, many of the musicians and creators interviewed in this zine do some of their best work in basements and living rooms. Here are a few crucial considerations when putting on any standup comedy show, especially in a non-traditional comedy/theater venue.

IS YOUR VENUE SUPPORTIVE OF COMEDY?

This is square one. If you're trying to start an open mic and the bartenders are unaware of the show and the bar is full of patrons who only care about a sporting event on TV, don't waste your time or other performers' time. A bar should pay you for your efforts if you are taking the time to organize an open mic, set up a PA system, are pushing the mic, and giving the bar free publicity. Management rescinding financial support (even fifty dollars per week, which is *nothing* for a bar), twisting your arm to sell more food/drinks, or trying to micromanage the show are all red flags. If they try to pull that shit, pull up your stakes, shake hands, and get out before it inevitably ends on a bad note.

DO THEY HAVE A SEPARATE SHOW SPACE?

Whenever possible, get your stage away from wherever chit-chat might occur (i.e. the bar). In some cases, audience members can be trained to order quietly and bar staff will also be respectful of the show. You must recognize bar patrons have the right to not watch your show if you're sharing their space. If you're in a separate space, you can charge a nominal cover/donation for the comics. Per the request of the venue, our first Friday show did not charge a cover, so we had occasional problems with chatty people who were just there to fill growlers. In retrospect, we had very few incidents over a two-year-span when we or management had to remove anyone. It's an interesting phenomenon, especially in comedy, where good, respectful shows "train" audiences to return that respect.

Reed Sedgwick at Open Gallery in Louisville, Ky. Photo by Lou Tingle.

WHEN SETTING UP A HOUSE SHOW, DOES IT HAVE ALL OF THE AMENITIES OF A PUBLIC SPOT?

Is your house clean? Is your bathroom clean? Is it handicapped accessible? Do you have chairs, lights, and a PA of some sort? Do you have a system for collecting cover/donations for the touring performers? These are all considerations many show-runners take for granted.

Also, keep in mind the type of comedy venue you are running. Many punk and dive bars suffer from late-arriving audiences. If the flyer says "7 PM Doors, 8 PM Show" and the first band doesn't start until 9 PM, then the audience will internalize that and arrive forty-five minutes late. Forever. This trend pervades in the comedy world. "Comedy-time" is a standard assumption the show won't begin until at least a half an hour past its posted time. Don't do this. It penalizes the people who made it a point to get there early, especially if it's a house show! Imagine the leap of faith people take walking into a stranger's house, only having to sit there nervously staring at their phone for forty-five minutes.

ARE YOU PROMOTING IT?

No, I mean actually promoting it. Are you making a snazzy flyer and posting them in places where interested/interesting people would see them? Are you reaching out to local cultural calendars, newsletters, or blogs with a strong readership? Are you keeping your social media accounts up to date, taking into consideration how few people are likely to see (or remember) individual posts on their timelines?

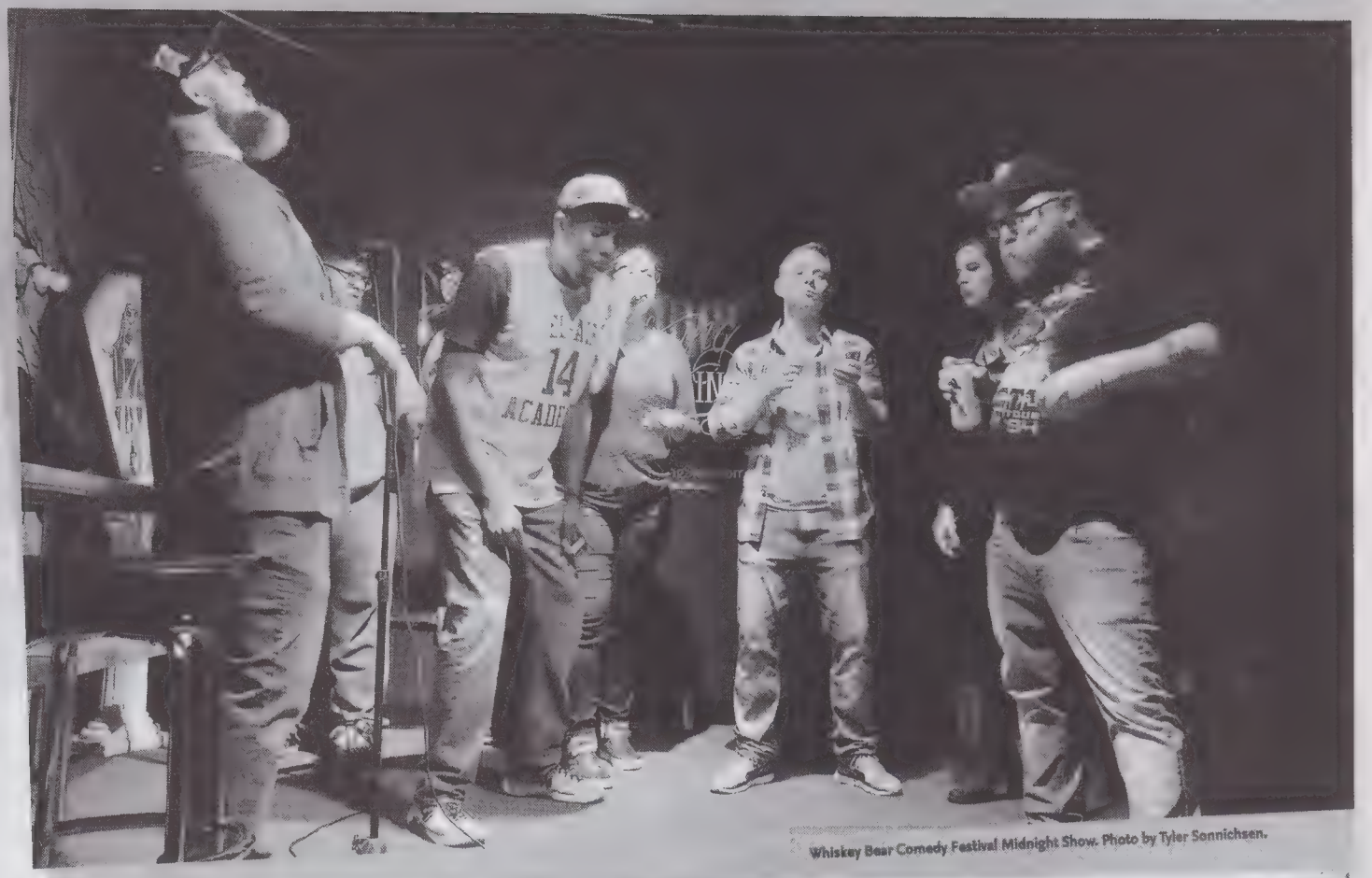
Considering how many mechanisms and civic processes have actively compromised the culture of flyering, posting in public space has gradually become more of a defiant and subversive act. In comedy, flyers that are aesthetically offensive or hackneyed (as so many are) don't portend well for the quality of the show. Let me give props to one of my favorite comics, Laura Sanders (New Orleans, La.) As a graphic artist, she molds and contorts the same sensibilities that make her jokes good into outstanding comedy flyers and graphics. When someone makes a flyer so good that it doesn't deserve to languish on the internet, then it usually follows that (get this) the show it's advertising must be pretty good, too. Invest the money.

HOW TO RECORD LIVE COMEDY

After a few years of performing standup regularly, you should have a reasonable amount of workable material that you may want to record for an applicable hybrid of merchandise, "press kit," or posterity. When the time comes, you need to be prepared to invest a reasonable amount of time and money. If you advertise the show as an album recording, the audience will likely be more amenable to paying a suitable ticket price that will help defray expenses. If you can't convince twenty to thirty people to spend money to watch you tell jokes for forty-five minutes, then perhaps you aren't ready to record an album.

If you're a comic, spoken word artist, poet, or other performer without musical backing, you're at a definitive advantage. You won't need to spend money on expensive studio time, and the amount of mastering necessary for any release (analog or digital) pales in comparison to what bands require. In most cases, you can record and release your material for a fraction of what it might cost a band or even a singer-songwriter.

That being said, do *not* try to cut corners. If you need to rent a venue to ensure a quality atmosphere and no drunks interrupting your show, so be it. Rentals are rarely a necessity in smaller cities. Kevin Tit, Dan Alten, and many others have released fine-sounding recordings made at house shows. Shane Rhyne and I both recorded our albums at The Pilot Light in Knoxville, which is a small not-for-profit club with a dedicated sound system, good acoustics, and easy to pack for laughs.



Whiskey Bear Comedy Festival Midnight Show. Photo by Tyler Sonnichsen.

"IF SOMEBODY COMES TO YOUR SHOW AND THEY LOVE IT, THEY'LL TELL A FRIEND," RHYNE LIKES TO SAY, "AND IF THEY HATE IT, THEY'LL TELL A HUNDRED."

Hire somebody who knows what they're doing to supervise, edit, and master your recording. On the night you're recording your set, the technical setup is the last thing you'll want to be thinking about, and it will probably affect your performance. Erich Laux (Ann Arbor) had his recording laptop shit the bed fifteen minutes into his headline set. He did release it on Bandcamp as the *Technical Difficult* EP, at least, so he salvaged something for his efforts.

Your phone or a tinny Windows Media Audio codec recorder is fine for recording your set for reference in helping work on jokes. If you're planning to release this shit publicly (much less ask people for money), get a multi-track recorder, or pay someone with one who knows how to use it. Record in uncompressed WAV files, and hold onto the masters. Bandcamp (There's comedy on bandcamp?—yup, lots) won't let you upload anything that's in a compressed format, and upsampling's going to get you into trouble. A sizeable chunk of your listenership will be on car stereos. Keep that in mind when the audience's laughter throws all the meters into the red or if you employ a Pixies-esque LOUDquietLOUD delivery—the listener won't make it through one track and an entity like SiriusXM won't even consider adding it to their playlists. Spend the money.

Over the past decade, standup comedy has increasingly embraced analog media for merchandise and distribution. Though I doubt he was the first to do so, Kyle Clark (Los Angeles) was the first DIY comic I remember putting out his own cassette, 2013's *Pizza Night*. At the time, it seemed brilliant for a comic to take advantage of the cassette format. They're relatively cheap to make, possible to dub and package at home, and above all, spoken word doesn't require levels of fidelity that dubbed cassettes can't easily accommodate.

Though spoken-word doesn't sell as fast on vinyl, every record shop has a comedy section. Standup is a genre with relatively few collectors' items. Every thrift store in the world has beat-up Steve Martin or George Carlin records available for a dollar (Carlin actually started his own label, Eardrum, which had major-label distribution). Even Redd Foxx and Rudy Ray Moore party records, despite the mythology that surrounds them, are not hard to find.

Perhaps one of the reasons standup doesn't sell well is because it requires less divided attention than music—why it's most often enjoyed by commuters in their cars or on their headphones. Standup is actually a great medium for analog release. Since records can comfortably fit twenty-two minutes per side at 33 1/3 RPM, that allows for a record to capture a forty-five minute headline set. There's a reason CDs served live music so much better, as bands' headline sets would typically stretch longer.

Occasionally, though, comedy vinyl fosters amazing moments. A few summers ago, a group of six acquaintances wound up in my living room after a party in my neighborhood. We got into a conversation about times we'd been at parties broken up by cops, and within a few minutes, I had everybody sitting intently and laughing at Kyle Kinane's "cool party cop" story from his *Loose in Chicago* LP.

COMEDY AND CAPITAL(ISM)

Any comic who says standup is about being funny and only about being funny is lying to themselves (and probably terrible), but I'm not writing this to cast dispersions on people who've made more money than me (which is most working comics). That being said, anybody who gets into making music or doing standup in the twenty-first century for the purpose (or with the expectation) of making money is a fucking idiot.

In January 2019, the Pittsburgh Improv booked Louis C.K. for a weekend of shows at $85 per ticket. The local alt-weekly reached out to local comic, producer, and punk fan Shannon Norman for his thoughts. This was his response (abridged):

> *"Louis C.K.'s new material is the work of a man out of time. Just look at his Netflix special… it's all lazy "first thought theater" … created under duress, in a vacuum and that is not a way to make art.… [Regarding the Improv,] I know people who book comedy shows in living rooms that are more professional, have greater scruples, and aware of their scenes' local talent than that television-less Buffalo Wild Wings. The Improv locally and as a chain will learn nothing from the backlash because tickets for Louis C.K., [as well as known abusers] TJ Miller and Jeremy Piven will continue to be sold to the willfully ignorant."*

Shannon's response to the *City Paper* did much to echo my general frustration about CK and others hopefully en route to the dustbin of history. It's no longer about whether he "deserves" to still have a career after his (long well-known among the comedy community) sexual indiscretions came to light; it's that I just don't fucking care. Still, every time someone in that elevated position does *anything*, thousands of open mic comics weigh in with bad takes and flood social media (which is already calculated to minimize publicity of small-time, DIY, and independently produced events) in favor of perpetuating the fruitful Internet Rage cycle. Note that the *Pittsburgh City Paper* made no effort to ask Shannon about any local shows or events coming up.

Comedy suffers from how myopic many casual audience members' experiences of it are. For example, pro-am showcases, which exist as a mechanism to fill clubs on off-nights so they can inch toward their bottom line, rely upon comics (some of whom are doing standup for the first time as a bucket-list item) to fill the seats with co-workers, friends, and family. Once someone starts to pursue comedy seriously, they spend an unidentifiable amount of time at open mics and it gets harder to thrive in situations where they are required to put butts in seats.

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I recently showcased at a club in the Midwest that was a perfect case study. The host put me toward the end of a pro-am showcase. She graciously gave me a longer feature set, but I had the luxury of following some dude who spent three minutes talking about sucking his own dick and occasionally making uncomfortable advances on my friend sitting near the stage. I understood that many of the people performing the local spots were not seasoned comedians, but what the audience got was a cavalcade of sexism, homophobia, and general negativity. The person I felt the worst for was the emcee. She was trying her best as a comic, but was forced outside of her job description, managing the staff, and waiting on and bussing tables. The club's sustainability would have been threatened otherwise.

The first time I remember recognizing this late-capitalist writing on the wall was in 2007. A club I worked at a few times called all local emcees and features together for an afternoon meeting. The club's owner announced a new system was going to help determine

who would be working there in the future. Though he refused to use the term, he was instituting a "bringer" framework (whereby the performer's workload would be determined by how many audience members they put in seats). Only one person at the meeting, a seasoned African-American comic, had the wherewithal to speak up. "In other words," he said, "you're going to start giving bullshit comics work so long as they sell tickets? Isn't that the club's job?"

At that time in my life, it helped to be living where I was. I'd moved to D.C. largely because of punk. It had less to do with my fandom of bands like Minor Threat, The Dismemberment Plan, and Bad Brains, and more to do with my general curiosity to discover what it was about D.C. that generated such brilliant and innovative art. I read interviews with Ian MacKaye where he discussed his disgust with the club system in D.C., not just because they excluded teenagers trying to see music at the most foundational time in their lives, but because his bands weren't interested in working as beer salesmen. Neither was I, nor was anyone who, as Mitch Hedberg once said, "Got into comedy to do comedy, which is weird—I know."

At the time, Uber was four years from launching and it would be at least five years before I would hear the term "gig economy," but standup had long fit well within that framework. Comedy had never been completely analogous with career longevity or retirement plans, but performers were starting to be expected to shoulder the costs of business for their (even itinerant) employers. The drive for mass appeal, as it had been doing since the dawn of the entertainment industry, had placed an increasingly big wedge between risk and reward, quality and output.

For most of the twenty-first century, the only way most indie bands have been able to earn a living by just making music has been by selling rights to corporate advertisers. As Ronen Givony pointed out in his 33 1/3 volume about Jawbreaker, it's hard to be mad at bands for "selling out" when corporations are the only entities paying them their true worth for their work anymore. For comics, it's even more complicated.

As with music, there are ways to make a living doing standup in 2018, and many of them are humiliating. Like any capitalist enterprise, comedy clubs have been slowly shedding accoutrements over the past thirty years to keep themselves sustainable. A handful have managed to remain solvent and relatively constructive for their local and regional scenes. Many, though, are in one of various stages of desiccation. Knoxville's comedy club Sidesplitters closed in 2014 after years of open hostility toward the local scene, even going so far as to fire local emcees over simple grudges (a few of whom have since blown up on a national scale). In the five years I've lived in Knoxville, a booked open mic I attended there shortly before it closed was the worst night of comedy I've witnessed here.

"At this point, most traditional comedy clubs are often owned by old white dudes whose idea of a comedian looks a hell of a lot like them and them only," wrote Brandie Posey, "The stats on women, non-binary and headliners of color working at those kinds of places are abysmal. DIY spaces are imperative for creating stage time for people who are denied time at clubs. You need to get onstage to get good and learn."

"Comedy clubs are just, at the end of the day, businesses," said Altercation Punk Comedy founder JT Habersaat. "This can bristle the DIY spirit in some people, which I understand.... That being said, there are some comedy clubs that you can just tell rely on the bringer model still.... It's pay to play, which in the punk world is of course the kiss of death. Fuck that noise."

Habersaat has also commented on some clubs and venues (cf. what I said earlier about "clean comedy") try to enforce content regulations on performers. These cases are surprisingly common. Portland/Los Angeles comic Amy Miller recently posted on social media about one club which tried, using barely veiled language, to censor any materials which lay audiences often ascribe to female performers. Miller cited that it was a notoriously male club and two women were booked on the show, which was clearly advertised as 21+. Still, the booker asked her, at the behest of the owner, to confirm she was doing "family friendly" material that avoided "biological humor."

I wish I was making stories like these up. It's not shocking, though, now that art has been successfully demonetized by the technological advances of the twenty-first century and comedians were bound for the lowest rung on that totem pole. Rather than book actual comedians, clubs have been increasingly booking celebrities like Dustin "Screech" Diamond to fill their seats.

Today, writing and production work still pay the bills for a lot of the busiest and most respected standups in Los Angeles and New York. However, as late capitalism continues constricting where and how comics can make money, standup has become increasingly part and parcel of the greater gig economy. Employees are expected to shoulder the costs of doing business, spending unimaginable sums of money and time in order to make themselves employable. This includes an ahistorical emphasis on creating "content:" podcast episodes, streaming videos, tweets, goofy status updates, memes, selfies… the list goes on and gets increasingly depressing.

Comedy has always had a complicated relationship with the internet: certainly contemptuous, yet cripplingly codependent. In the mid-2000s, almost every comic I knew maintained a Myspace page and a personal blog in order to promote themselves and their upcoming performances. Both services were free and quickly did well to supplant the functionality of early message boards and user groups. By 2008, Facebook expanded their service beyond users with an email ending in .edu, played a crucial role in the campaign and

COMEDY SHOWS

I can't reiterate enough to do some digging into your local/regional comedy scene, but if you live in or are visiting the following areas, here are some shows that challenge and build upon the traditional framework of standup and might appeal to punk fans. Remember that, like the greatest and most influential of punk/hardcore bands, comedy shows tend to have a brief shelf life.

THE LATE LATE BREAKFAST (Los Angeles, Calif.)

Tyler Jackson and Danny Maupin started this show in Louisville, eventually relocating to Los Angeles via Chicago. Their shows happen on hung-over Sunday afternoons, challenging comics to channel their bits through a bottomless pit of filters, including walking around the audience blindfolded (I had to do that), in character as Guy Fieri, or while having their set translated in real-time. You can understand why it's currently in high demand at indie festivals. (latelatebreakfast.com)

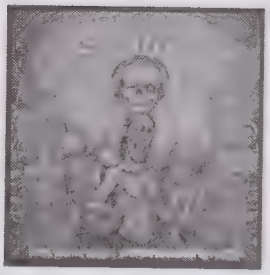
FRIENDLYTOWN (Knoxville, Tenn.)

I co-founded this Monday show at The Pilot Light in summer of 2016. It posits a quasi-utopian fictional community, where everyone's "set" is their contribution to the city council's focus of the week: creating a mascot, some original public access programming, or devising ways for our town to win back an estranged lover. There's an open mic portion at the beginning for newer comics. It's the best thing I've ever been involved in in comedy. It's also a zine! (friendlytownradio.com)

PUNKHOUSE COMEDY (Washington, DC)

Kevin Tit, a Hawaiian-bred comic and punk musician (most recently for Chill Parents), started a series of comedy house shows in DC when the local club and bar scene didn't provide an adequate outlet. He currently produces a monthly show in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood that puts standup comics together with a featured punk band. Laughing and moshing: a match made in heaven. (kevint.it/punkhousecomedy)

the Derelicts
When you notice Prostitutes frontman Kevin Patrick McGovern calling a record "the album of the decade... catchy, psychotic and filled with punk rawk rage. Five out of five stars" you tend to sit up and take notice.



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The Hip Priests
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The Cutthroat Brothers
Donny Paycheck and Jason Cutthroat have been called "the Sweeney Todds of rock" - and The Cutthroat Brothers make good on that tag. They're a pair of demon barbers with a razor-sharp riffs and dangerously catchy songs, dishing out their bloodthirsty brand of garage punk.

ZEKE
500 Vinyl only (because its a Picture disc)
Side 1 Pinstriping the Dutchmans Coffin in its entirety Galaxy 500, Wrecking Machine, Chiva, Hate, Donde Esta. Kid, Runnin' Shine, Green Barracuda, My Hemi Cuda, 02 Cubic Inch V-8 Powered Blues, Highway Star.
Side 2 7 " versions of
West Seattle Acid Party. Schmidt Value Pack. Spoonful of soul, It's Alright, Diluadid, Love Gun, You Gotta Roll, Jack Torrence, Evil Dead, Let's Go, Evil Women, Shock Waves.

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Emaleigh Gwin at [illegible] Hair [illegible] at the Birdhouse Community [illegible] Knoxville, [illegible] Photo by [illegible]

subsequent election of Barack Obama, and supplanted most of the functionality of Myspace and bloggers. The speed and scale of user migration was blinding.

In standup as in anything, the global village Facebook intentionally created without knowing (or caring about) their destructive power forged a largely detrimental platform. Pittsburgh comic Tim Ross noted so many Facebook groups devoted to standup are terrible for an obvious reason: any decent comic worth their salt is at showcases and open mics talking shit, not sitting on their phone browsing Facebook groups. Ironically, Ross has become known outside of Pittsburgh through his clever use of Reddit and Facebook in going to war with Trump supporters, a testament to the codependency of the internet with comedy as mode of communication (if not a raw art form).

Standup comics (at least, good ones) are born critical thinkers. When people ask me if I believe humor has a leftist bias, I say no, but I do believe critical thought does. This actually happened to me once after I closed a show in Arlington, Va. I got into an argument with a Koch Brothers accessory who insisted standup should be "right down the middle." He also tried to convince me the DNC was responsible for institutionalized racism in this country. (At least some conservatives are finally admitting it exists, right? Silver linings.)

To someone who wants to earn a living creating humor in twenty-first century America, they need to either work their way into a desiccating club system or figure out ways to creatively monetize their humor. For most comics who don't fit in the club system, the latter is the only real hope. And that sucks, because the internet is full of talentless frauds who are only good at manipulating online numbers. The drive and supposedly-requisite need for off-stage social media "content" from comedians has transformed the art form more than radio or television ever did. It subjects material to content-poachers, regressive trolling, and unwarranted tagging by gruesomely unfunny people (i.e. the phenomenon of male users explaining female comics' jokes back to them, which I witness almost daily).

Another unfortunate commonality between punk rock and standup is that whenever big-money entertainment attempts to depict it (even in an allegedly sympathetic light) they almost always fuck it up. These include depictions of "punks" in movies blockbuster (e.g. Bill Paxton in *The Terminator*) and cult (Jon Gries's King Vidiot in *Joysticks*, a boner comedy I discovered via Ben Snakepit's Razorcake column). I wish I had a nickel for every time somebody asked me if I enjoyed *Last Comic Standing*. I would usually just bite my tongue and say no and kill the conversation rather than take a deep breath and start venting about how much I hated that show. On a fundamental level, anything that posits art (in any format) within the framework of competition is regressive and dumb. Laughs (and successes related to obtaining them) aren't finite resources. On a deeper level, the show ossified harmful hierarchies in standup that implied a need for some standardized sense of humor. Again, this is not to denigrate the success of the comics who've succeeded on the shows. Every now and then, a genuinely good comic from an overlooked scene (Atlanta's Clayton English, for example) squeaks through the system and takes the well-deserved bump of legitimacy in John and Jane Q. Public's eyes.

Then again, the fact that the public needs these corporately modulated platforms to sell them a theatrical art form is just dumb. In 2014, a handful of Knoxville comics stood outside of the Tennessee Theater after *Last Comic Standing Live* emptied out to pass out flyers for the first annual Scruffy City Comedy Festival. I understand nobody loves getting handbills in their face immediately after a show, but so many of those suburbanites looked at us as if we were putting dogshit into their hands. This audience had been trained impulsively to mistrust any standup who wasn't on television or channeled through New York or Los Angeles. Even emphasizing it was locally produced and cheaper for a three-day pass than one ticket to *LCS* was pointless.

That being said, we did find our audience and the festival was a great time. Like any independently produced festival, the event

GOOD SOURCES ON INDIE/DIY COMEDY

Though standup comedy has existed for (technically) millennia, there is not a huge library of books on it. Piles of memoirs exist by comedy legends that one can look to for education and inspiration, as well as some interesting podcasts (i.e. *The History of Standup* by Wayne Federman) and a handful of overviews by famous comedy nerds (e.g. Judd Apatow's *Sick in the Head: Conversations about Life and Comedy*). Here are a few recommended titles that address comedy and DIY and/or punk.

ZINE: *How to Make a Standup Comedy Show at Home with Your Friends* by Dan Alten. Dan is a wacky dude who is very serious about DIY standup. Last year, he realized how many of his favorite shows on the road happened in folks' living rooms, so he decided to make a zine to sell at gigs and encourage readers to consider booking their own shows. People into punk are used to going to house shows for music or book clubs, so why not comedy shows? (Available for $8 on Venmo at Dan-Alten)

INDIE PRESS BOOK: *Killing for a Living* by JT Habersaat (Altercation). Habersaat, who is based in Austin, has been celebrating the love affair between standup and punk rock for most of his adult life. This book is a catalog of a series of tours he completed on shoestring budgets over this decade. (jtcomedy.bigcartel.com)

HISTORY: *No Applause, Just Throw Money* by Trav S.D. (Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux 2006) Trav is a lifelong Vaudeville fanatic whose writing style is as insightful as it is entertaining, drawing direct lines between the Vaudeville tradition and modern day interactive/participatory performance art.

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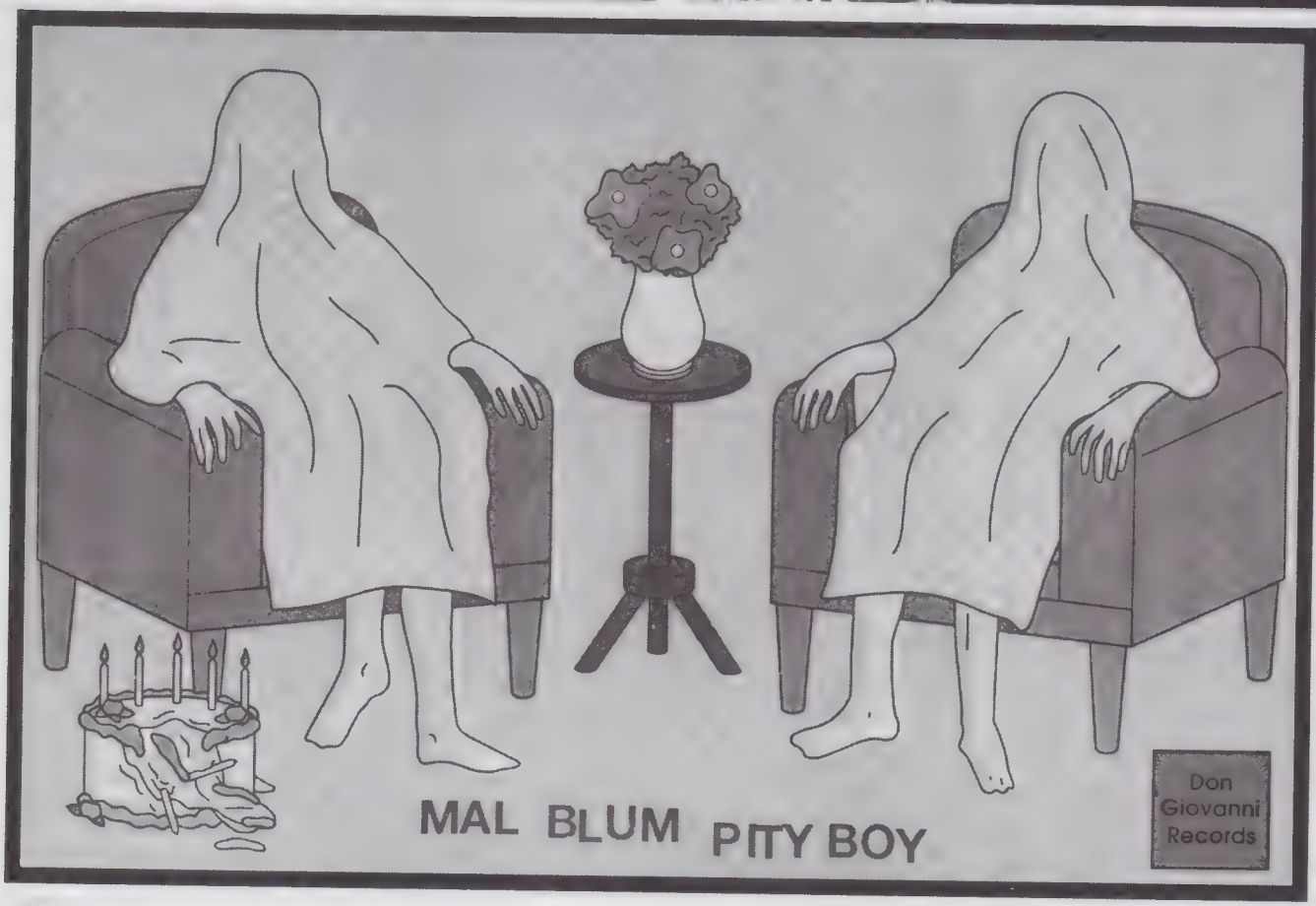
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didn't exist in a vacuum; it was the culmination of years of grassroots networking and a talented, enthusiastic pool of comics in the Southeast and beyond.

PUNK AND INDIE COMEDY FESTIVALS

For comics in smaller scenes as well as those operating on the fringes in larger cities, festivals have grown in fundamental importance. Indie festivals provide an opportunity to perform to new audiences in a different environment; expanding one's geography is crucial to growing as a writer and performer. Newer comics often get trapped in a place where they're using names of friends in the back of the room as punch lines or just punting sets because the stakes feel so low. Whenever I field emails from comics looking for a show in Knoxville, I rely heavily on testimony from friends in other scenes. Let this be a cogent reminder to stay involved and supportive of your local scene (not to mention just not to be a dick, as it will come back on you).

One grim reality in standup, like in DIY punk, is how much time one has to put in to establish the connections necessary to book anything with more gravity than a run of regional open mics. My first "tour," which I did through the Midwest in 2011, outside of showcases in Chicago, was mostly that. At least bands have a few members who can combine their networks.

Many comics raised on punk rock started festivals guided by the ethos, including Whiskey Bear (Columbus), Burning Bridges (Pittsburgh), and Altercation (Austin). This is a very short list. Some festivals are invitational, and many charge a nominal fee for comics to apply to perform (usually $10-$50). In most cases, the money collected goes directly into festival expenses like renting venues, advertising, and incidentals. Common criticisms of this model are fairly obvious.

"The bigger and grosser trend that I have noticed these days, which as a comic and promoter really bothers me, is the increasing amount of 'comedy festivals' that seem to be popping up as obvious-

SOME COMEDY LABELS

For the past two decades, the internet has made comedy release and distribution much more accessible. Spotify, Pandora, Amazon, Apple Music, and (everyone's favorite/artist-friendly) Bandcamp have provided platforms for independent comics, poets, and other spoken-word artists to make their recordings public. Here's a short list of standup-specializing labels to browse, a couple of which have a heavy stock of physical releases (including vinyl and K7 file formats).

Stand Up! Records (Minneapolis, Minn.)
standuprecords.com

A Special Thing (Los Angeles, Calif.)
astrecords.virb.com

Jackknife Records (Brooklyn, N.Y.)
jackknifecomedy.bandcamp.com

All Things Records (Los Angeles, Calif.)
allthingsrecords.com

800 Pound Gorilla Records (Nashville, Tenn.)
800poundgorillarecords.com

On Tour Records (Frankfort, Ky.)
ontourrecords.com

GONER RECORDS

NOTS
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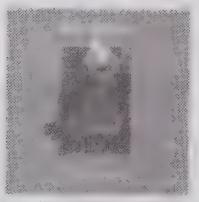

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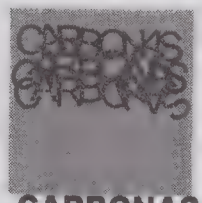
BAD TIMES
Streets Of Iron



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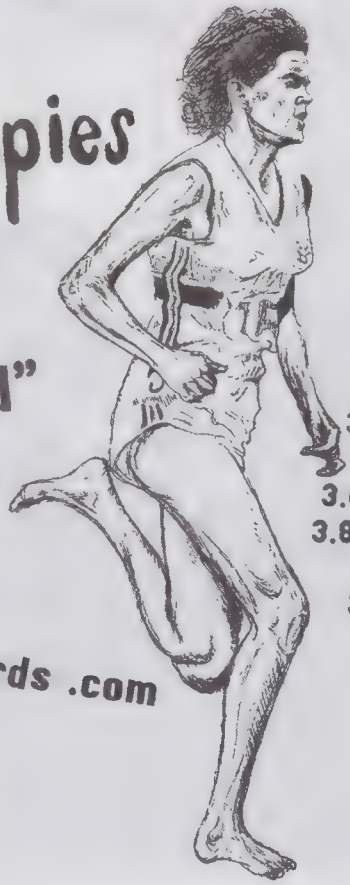

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2.28 Chiang Mai, Thailand
3.2 Bankok, Thailand @ The Overstay
3.3 Saigon, Vietnam
3.6 Saigon, Vietnam @ Soma Art Lounge
3.8 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia @ Rumah Api
3.10 Malacca, Malaysia @ The Key
3.11 Batu Pahat, Malaysia @ The Wall
3.13 Hanoi, Vietnam @ Solist Pub

the dumpies.com

Laughing Audience at Summer Fling comedy house show in Knoxville, Tenn. Photo by Jeffrey Chastain.

STANDUP COMICS (AT LEAST, GOOD ONES) ARE BORN CRITICAL THINKERS.

to-me cash grabs," added Habersaat, "The comedy scene is an ever-expanding ocean and, boy, it is filled with sharks."

Most festivals in this echelon also take care to book diverse lineups, including a multiplicity of voices and experiences on their shows. Festivals that don't book women (or at least very few), for example, should be avoided. A finite number of festivals still exist that are run by notorious harassers and people otherwise exiled from the comedy community. I won't name names here (if you have friends in this world, they can fill you in), but do exercise caution. If you've been accepted to a festival run by somebody you don't know, don't hesitate to ask around—you're never going to ruin your "career" by pulling out of a questionable situation. Producers and comics who are persona non grata prey on comics whose networks haven't expanded to the people they've wronged. Considering the double-edged sword social media has been for standup, it is at least holding people accountable.

PUNK AND COMEDY: AN INEVITABLE COMBINATION

Sumukh Torgalkar, a Columbus friend now based in L.A. running shows in Highland Park, often writes thoughtful observations about standup on his blog sumukhcomedy.com. One conversation we had, which he turned into a post, was about how today so many more comics are touring independently than when we started. Fortunately, more shows have popped up because of the demand and the expanding networks.

"For all the Netflix specials, the uproar over some comedy coverage happening each week, or the arguing that occurs between comedians over whatever topic on any given day on social media, nothing has actually changed with how standup comedy operates in the country when you actually travel the country," Sumukh wrote, "What matters to me at least, as a performer and even perhaps as an audience member, is one's ability to change."

This should sound familiar to anyone who creates or follows underground music: Every night in almost every major city—and most smaller cities across America—some relatively unknown comic is performing for free to an audience that is absolutely losing its shit. On my LP release tour this winter, I featured on Wet Cash, a monthly showcase at Dark Tower Comics in Chicago. Cameron Gillette, a goofy young local comic who moved up there from Alabama years ago, closed the show and blew the roof off the place. I messaged a couple friends in Knoxville that I felt like I was watching Green Day at Gilman Street in 1991. I can't count the number of Mondays over the past four years at the Pilot Light or First Fridays between 2015 and 2017 when I've had similar epiphanies, feeling genuinely bad for people who aren't able to experience what's happening in those spaces, in those moments. I fully acknowledge how many lows one deals with in the comedy world, but I'll be damned if the highs don't obliterate them.

Tyler Sonnichsen is a cultural geographer, standup comic, and occasional contributor to Razorcake. *His latest comedy album,* Modern Life Is Awesome *is available on LP/CS/Digital at tylersonic.bandcamp.com*

SWEET KNIVES

Alicja Trout is one of my favorite musicians. The first time I saw Lost Sounds ended up leaving an impression that's lasted almost twenty years. Alicja pounded her synthesizer like a percussion instrument—think Screamers, not Human League—and wailed on her flying V guitar. The band, well, they didn't look calm and didn't look like they were having a good time, but they were radioactive. They played like they were under a ton of internal pressure and looked like an electronic graveyard zapped to life. Band members shot slitted stares and yelled clipped shouts across the stage at one another. The inter-band tension radiated out like lightning bolts. I'd like to imagine the attentive audience members got their DNA scrambled at that show and we all took a bit of their music into the sewers of the underground like mutated rats, brains visibly pulsating when we played Lost Sounds records for years and years afterwards, emanating little mutant blinks of light all around the world.

At the core of the glowing, throbbing nucleus of Lost Sounds were Alicja Trout, Jay Reatard, and Rich Crook. Alicja and Jay each wrote half the music and shared equal creative responsibility. They were the twin brain, the conjoined creative body with a common cause. Until they suddenly weren't. The band ended swiftly, but Alicja didn't miss a beat forming River City Tanlines. Gone was the synth damage and out came unadulterated guitar rock'n'roll. Her productivity as a singer, songwriter, and visual artist continues to be off the charts through today. You really can't go wrong by soaking in any of the bands she's been involved with since the dissolution of Lost Sounds: Black Sunday, Alicja-Pop!, Mouserocket, Destruction Unit, or Fresh Flesh.

Sweet Knives began as a Lost Sounds reboot, playing Alicja's songs. When Alicja, Rich, and John Garland got back together, they quickly realized that they didn't want to be restricted to solely being a cover band of their old band. They still play with the arcing, tense, dirty-crackle lightning of Lost Sounds, but are also writing new songs that reflect where they are now. They're songs that come from lives that include responsible motherhood, sustainable rural farming with Mennonite neighbors, a keyboardist who's also in the yacht rock band Relentless Breeze, and creative resilience that bobs like a long-lasting flare on a dark and stormy sea.

Alicja Trout—Guitar, singer / **Rich Crook**—Drums / **John Garland**—Guitar / **Lori McStay**—Keys / **Eli Steel**—Bass

Interview by **Todd Taylor**
Photos by **Mark Murrmann**
Layout by **Eric Baskauskas**

Todd: Let's do a little bit of background. I know Alicja from Lost Sounds, which existed from 1999.
Alicja: We do have some cassette tape recordings marked '98. I would say the first shows were late '98 or '99.
Rich: At The Parallax.
Todd: And ended in 2005.
Alicja: That sounds about right. When it ended, it ended.
Todd: So a six-year run. Pretty well-defined end. And, Rich, you were in the very first formation of Lost Sounds, correct?
Rich: Jay and I were in Reatards when the Reatards ended that lineup, which was '98, '99.
Alicja: It was always a revolving lineup. But you were a long-term member.
Rich: Right. So been there from the start.
Todd: So in 1998, Alicja you were in a band previous to Lost Sounds?
Alicja: The one band that was releasing stuff that was getting out in the world was The Clears. Maybe we had a two-year run. I don't know if even that long.
Todd: You also had an acting credit that year.
Alicja: Oh, possibly. I might've gotten roped into something.
Todd: You were in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*.
Alicja: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.
Todd: As a "featured extra."
Alicja: I didn't know they called it that.
Todd: So is it accurate to call Sweet Knives a reboot of Lost Sounds?
Alicja: I'm going to take it back a little bit, but Rich was living in Chicago for a long time and we'd been like, "One day we'd like to play some of these songs again." So we wrote all these songs. And then when he moved to the Tennessee area four, five years ago, we were like, "We could conceive getting together and making a batch of these songs happen again." At first we were just working with only Lost Sounds material. They were the songs I wrote. We had thought about doing the ones that Jay sang, but it wasn't going to work out that way—someone else singing Jay's part.
Todd: Why is that?
Rich: I don't really think we wanted that element in the band. We just wanted to focus on the songs that you sing. We could wrap our heads around that idea of the reboot.
Alicja: Right. Maybe it churned for a second, but then wasn't going to happen. When did we make it where we actually were writing songs?
Rich: We gathered up a bunch of songs—her songs that she sung—and managed to work those out. We played that Gonerfest. It was all Lost Sounds songs. Shortly after that, you went, "It's so Lost Sounds-heavy. We're kind of a cover band of ourselves now." We did a great job with it. That's when the conversation started with you writing the newer songs.
Alicja: Oh, so we started with those four that were on the 7" when Rich just came across Tennessee to Memphis. We just made them up in my attic in my home studio right then on the spot. And I was like, "Okay, when you leave I'll go make something out of these songs." John Garland played guitar.
John: Just filled in guitar on a few tracks.
Alicja: John was the one who was like, "I'm liking playing these new ones," and it got us to do the album. Now we've got four more songs that didn't get ready for this tour. They're in test printing mode right now.
Todd: What's the biggest difference for you between doing Sweet Knives material and Lost Sounds material?
Alicja: Well, the Sweet Knives material doesn't have the angst or paranoia of Lost Sounds and it's also a different level of how long we've been playing music. Since we live in different areas, we don't practice as a band, and Lost Sounds were a weekly practice band and in just different points in our life. But mainly the sentiments behind the songs aren't distraught. They might have the same hyper-spazzy kind of sounds or the same kind of song structure—changes that we were using—but they don't have the darkness that was underlying it.
Rich: These same songs could have been written back then, but they would have probably been rejected.
Alicja: Yeah. That's actually a really good point. [laughter]
Rich: Due to the pop sensibility of the songs.
Alicja: Yeah.
Todd: So there was definitely—not a schism, but a balance/counterbalance between you, Alicja, and Jay with the Lost Sounds, or is that too nice?
Rich: I remember back then songs would be up for debate. "Are we gonna do this? Why aren't we gonna do this? What's the reason?" That's just being in a band in general, on discussing your songs. But, was it true, Jay was pretty heavy on fifty percent. You were pretty heavy on the fifty percent?
Alicja: Yeah.

Rich: And that's how it worked out.
Alicja: Yeah. Also, I would say that now, it's just like, "We've got a song, let's do it," 'cause we don't have as much time together. It's like, "Oh, here's a song, we're gonna make it work." Back then we had a giant pot to choose from.
Rich: Lost Sounds had a reputation they had to maintain as far as the songwriting goes. If it didn't meet that standard, then it got axed.

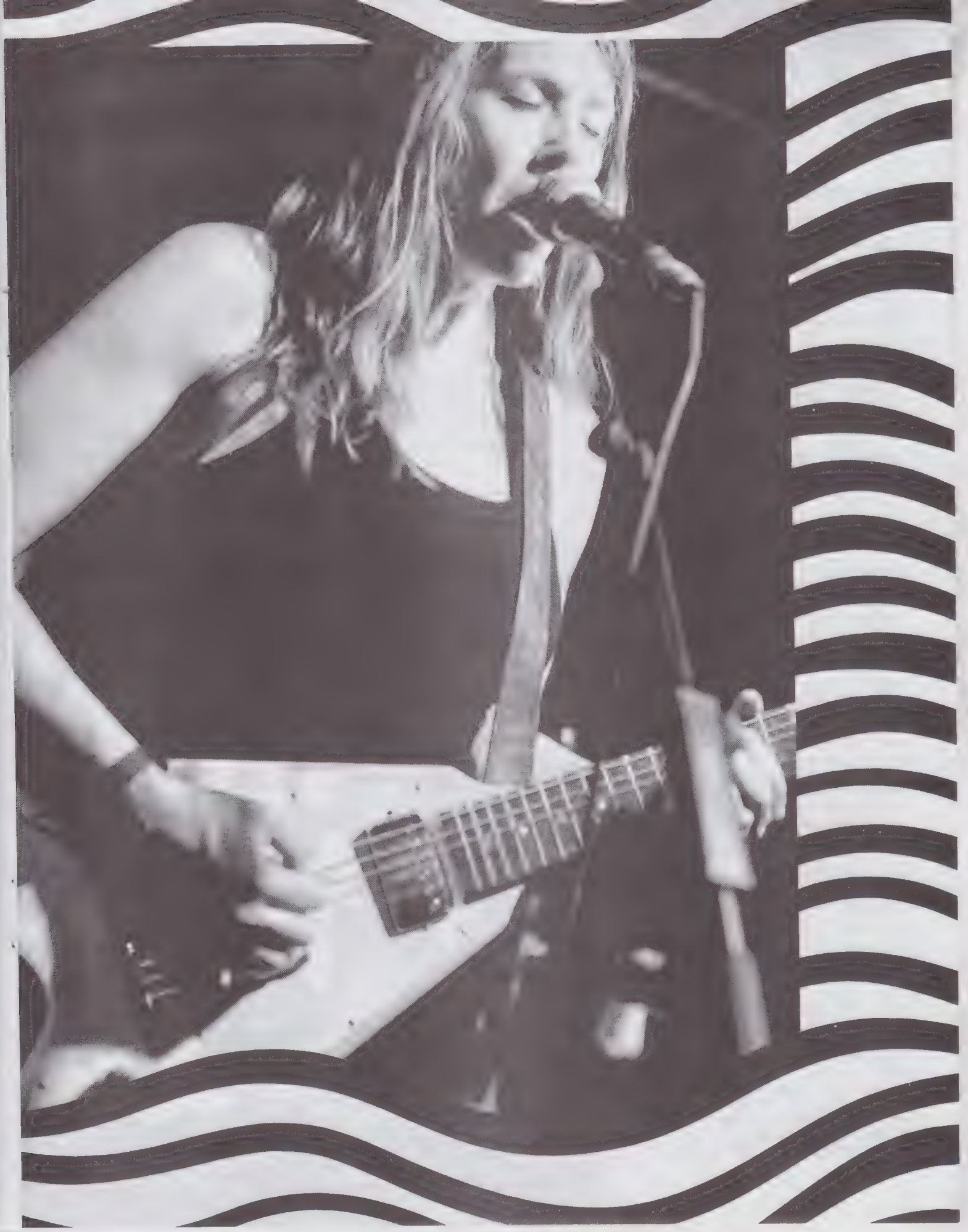
Todd: Right, right. Consolidated presentation.
Rich: Streamlined.
Todd: What were some internal rules? Are there stage or performance rules?
Alicja: We just like to be tight between songs and have tight endings.
Rich: We were always a quick load-in band, load-out band. Don't mess around on stage. Get your stuff off.
Alicja: Don't roll your cords in perfect position on stage.
Rich: We never wanted to be that band, where you're like, "Get off the stage!" That was important.
Alicja: We still have a little anxiety and that translates into the way the live set goes. For recording, it's a lot lighter. It just has to sound like the basis of rock'n'roll.
Todd: So, Alicja, are you still involved with the entire recording process? Because the Lost Sounds recorded every single piece of music themselves.
Alicja: Yeah, that's true. We, Lost Sounds, never went to a studio. So for these last four Sweet Knives songs, they were actually recorded in a studio. We have this huge Sears distribution center that millions of dollars were put into to become a big urban village and it has an art center in it. I had an artist residency there, and in that time, these guys came up and we recorded. I think the guy called it a "glorified home studio." It's nice, with Pro Tools. So we haven't ever just gone into a studio and put it in someone else's hands.
Todd: You've never had someone who comes in and produces you as a band?
Alicja: No, no, but Paul, the studio owner, was definitely involved. He was the one who set up all the mics, got them dialed in. He wasn't so happy with my mixes, but he's living with it, you know?
Todd: In all fairness, you have to live with it longer.
Alicja: Yeah. He kept saying, "I understand what aesthetic you're going for, but I just wish you'd do this." And I was just like, [shrugs] "Yeah."

Surrounded by all my junk and my working, broken, and half-working keyboards and weird little stuff I have around that makes sounds.

I called it the Tronic Graveyard 'cause headphones and the recording studio have always represented my internal safe space.

Todd: And that was internal?
Alicja: Jay was very self-conscious and even in the beginning of the band, he was like, "We've got to have the organ sound," 'cause that's what every band was using in the early 2000s.
Todd: Like a Farfisa?
Alicja: Yeah. And I was like, "Well, we don't have one and I've got all these weird synths that I've got left over from The Clears. I've got some Casios and I got a Korg and a weird Roland synth" and that's about what we got to use. Then Ryan Rousseau (Destruction Unit, Tokyo Electron, Earthman And Strangers) showed him a little bit of music that uses synth.
Rich: Took Jay in a corner and said, "Hey, listen to this."
Alicja: "Synths are good." And Jay was like, "Okay, synths they're good. I can use it."
Todd: [whispering] Here's The Screamers.
Alicja: Yeah, exactly.
Todd: It doesn't have to be The Human League.
Alicja: You don't have to keep that you like Devo a secret anymore.
Rich: Yeah. Jay always liked Ryan's sound opinions and suggestions. He really looked up to him that way.
Alicja: Jay was very much more worried about his reputation and we were just like [shrugs].
Todd: Reputation as a musician or reputation as a person?
Alicja: Not as a person. [laughter] As long as it was destroyed, that was fine with him.
Rich: No, it's sort of like a Ramones way.

Todd: What's the Tronic Graveyard? The Sweet Knives record was recorded there. Lost Sounds has a song titled that.
Alicja: That was just me looking around. It would be my room surrounded by all my junk and my working, broken, and half-working keyboards and weird little stuff I have around that makes sounds. I called it the Tronic Graveyard 'cause headphones and the recording studio have always represented my internal safe space. The electronic world, the recording world.
Todd: So you've also done most of—if not all—of the artwork for the bands that you're heavily involved with.
Alicja: As a default. They'd be like, "Oh, Alicja's gotta do a record cover." "Ahhh, I've got to come up with another idea!" [laughter] I know for the *Rat's Brains and Microchips* covers, we got the word back that when they came off the presses at United that everyone was standing around laughing at them. I was like, "I didn't realize how funny it was." Now I do. It was us floating on microchips outside a space window with two mice.
Rich: We're riding them, aren't we?
Alicja: We're riding the microchips in those black suits that we got at the mall.
Rich: Sweat poured out of the bottom of the legs.
Alicja: The four dollar suits. They were made to look like pleather. They looked like a real poor man's Judas Priest suit or something. Mainly, we got them 'cause there were plenty of them in different sizes on the three dollar rack. They've dry rotted since then. I sold a box of them dry rotted at a garage sale. The guy was thrilled. [laughter]
Todd: Lori, you're co-owner Shangri-La Records?
Lori: Yes, more of a minority partner, but my husband Jared owns Shangri-La and runs it. We have a third partner, John Miller. There are two full-timers. It's fun. We've had it since '99 and we just celebrated the thirty-year anniversary of the store itself. It's going strong.
Todd: You played with Alicja before in Ultracats.
Lori: Yeah. The Ultracats was right before Lost Sounds. And actually Jay played a couple shows with us.
Alicja: Oh yeah, I forgot that. Or just one, maybe. Oh, that's why he was always really mad at the band, because he got kicked out.
Lori: We had a rotation of guest people popping in and playing with us.
Alicja: "This isn't gonna work," 'cause he wanted to get in control of it and it wasn't that kind of band.
Lori: Cover songs. A couple originals. We were just having fun.
Rich: The Lori/Alicja dynamic was key to that band. To knock that off balance wouldn't have made sense.
Lori: Well, later, 'cause we've had reunion gigs through the years. In fact, we played just earlier this year. And Jay at one point got really mad and said we couldn't call it the Ultracats if he wasn't in it. [laughter]
Alicja: I don't remember that.



If I sit down and record a song or draw — whatever I get out of it, it's like a weight's lifted off me.

My brain's reorganized, like the same way sleep works.

Lori: He got all mad at you.
Alicja: I totally forgot about that. I have my solo project Alicja-Pop and Lori plays drums and sings in that.
Lori: I also have a yacht rock band called Relentless Breeze.
Todd: Wow.
Lori: I play keys and sing.
Alicja: The Relentless Breeze yacht rock band has to learn a lot of hard stuff, and she's like, "I've gotten pretty good at keyboards now," and we're like, "Well, we need a keyboard player."
Todd: Is it a lot of Loggins And Messina?
Lori: We aspire to play that. Our Waterloo, if you will, would be Kenny Loggins's "This Is It." We really, really want to play that, but no one on the internet's figured it out either. It's incredibly difficult. I look up to those guys. They're composers. Michael McDonald's a genius. I can't play any of his stuff. It's so hard. It's amazing.
Todd: I don't know if I'd use the word "genius," but I appreciate it.
Lori: [sings in high register] I really want to sing that and I can't.
Todd: You were in the Porch Ghouls too, right?
Lori: Yeah, yeah. I played drums in the Porch Ghouls for a while right before they did the big stadium tour with Aerosmith.
Rich: Bruce took over drumming?
Lori: Yeah. Well, they were coming out west and I was working at Shangri-La at the time, and my husband didn't want me to be away from the shop for two weeks when we had no merch or anything.
Alicja: Who's label was it on?
Lori: Joe Perry signed them right after I quit.
Alicja: But Joe Perry was like, "Wait, where's the girl drummer? That was why I signed the band." [laughter]
Lori: And I sang a song that we did in the Ultracats. It was a Little Richard song, "Get Down with It."
Todd: Why the name Sweet Knives? The internet search is weird—a lot of *sweeeet* knives.
Alicja: It was a song on the *Future Touch* album. We just needed a name.
Rich: We still wanted to have the Lost Sounds connection.
Alicja: "Sweet" is kind of hard to have *in* your name, but whatever. We're stuck with it. We always thought Lost Sounds was such a good name, but every so often a club would have printed us as, "The Lost Souls are playing tonight," and we'd be like, "No, that's totally wrong."
Lori: We got Lost Knives the other night.
Alicja: I don't know how that happened.
Todd: How does Memphis itself shape you and/or your approach to music?
Rich: I'm really into power pop and I love Memphis power pop.
Todd: Big Star.
Rich: Right. I always keep that framework in my head when I approach writing songs. So Memphis, I take a little piece of that with me everywhere I go.
Todd: Especially in your band Lover! I can hear that.
Rich: Yeah.
Alicja: One of my first jobs was working at Sun Studio. They used to have a cafe and I was a waitress there. We had an old Wurlitzer that played "Rocket 88" and "Bear Cat" by Rufus Thomas. I just absorbed that part of Memphis history from being in there and since songwriting's my interest, those are these quintessential, perfect beginning of the rock'n'roll era songs. Then being in Memphis, Eric, from Goner, a long time ago, he used to work at Shangri-La before Lori and her husband owned it. He was this connection between out of town bands, callin' on the actual landline phone and getting bands to come through town.
Todd: From around the world.
Alicja: I think he organized that first Guitar Wolf tour in the U.S. I was actually living in New Orleans at that time and saw them down there. But the Oblivians were making this connection with bands from New Orleans and Detroit and New York and Atlanta and the West Coast, and even foreign countries were coming through. It was like, "This is bridging Memphis rock'n'roll from the '50s

to now." We had a historic punk club, The Antenna, and it was pulling that stuff in all together into one thing—the new kind of music that got called garage punk in the late '90s/early two thousands—that did pay an homage to Memphis music history. Then on top of it, we had the R.L. Burnside style of blues, but it's not your typical donk, don-a, don-a blues. It's rockin' and puts you in a trance. We find sometimes our breakdowns can go into other genres.

Rich: Sort of like the Jon Spencer/R.L. Burnside style.

Alicja: Oh, I thought you meant in mocking. You're saying we actually had a song that really had an authentic one of those? 'Cause one time we told everybody we were Blues Hammer. The blues riff.

The one lady at the side stage was like, "You guys have got to turn down!" We were at an outside festival, Memphis Music & Heritage Festival on Main Street.

Todd: You know a thing about outdoor shows? You can walk farther away. It'll get quieter that way.

Lori: She was the organizer of the event.

Todd: Oh, that's a little different than someone on their lawn chair complaining about it.

Rich: Back to the Memphis connection. That same day, Jerry Schilling, Elvis's manager back in the late '60s, was at the show and he saw us. I told him, "Come watch us play." He was sitting right at Tower Records, right up front. That was a big deal for me. Nobody else cared. I'm sorry to interrupt.

Alicja: We played lots of awkward downtown places where people didn't want to hear us.

Todd: This is more of a conceptual question. We're going to open up to Tennessee. Are you guys familiar with the idea of psychogeography?

Rich: I think I can figure it out. [laughter]

Alicja: You're open to learning. Your brain's got the space and it's ready for some new information.

Todd: Psychogeography was a term that was introduced by the Situationists. There are different interpretations of it. One is an exploration of an urban environment, but by drifting through it, like, "I dropped myself into a neighborhood and I walked through the neighborhood and I observed."

Alicja: Oh, that's totally what I do. When you go to Europe, I'm like, "Why do I live in a place where I have to constantly be watching over my shoulder?" when there are places like this over there where you're just like free and safe. That's been something that's hung over my head all the time—like when my kids go out the door—I'm like, "Someone's gotta be watching them." I feel like when I let them go off and walk the dog around the block that I'm taking a risk. Probably I'm not, but it's just this thing. "Why do I live in a place where I have to worry about this?" Other than that, I really like Memphis. Memphis is—and maybe it's just the U.S. in general, but there's just a huge divide in the city. There's always the really wealthy part of town with the beautiful historic homes and then in Memphis, especially, is a huge one—places with trash all over the place. No trees.

Rich: I think I walked away from psychogeography with a whole different thing in my head.

Todd: Do it.

Rich: I thought you meant apply that to songwriting. And I thought you could look around in the woods that you live near and pretend you're a little fairy and write a song like that.

Todd: That's a nice thing with a theoretic construct; it's open to interpretation.

Rich: It's funny for me because I live out in the middle of the country now and I'm responsible if I choose to recycle. I have to take in my own garbage. There's not a garbage truck that comes and picks up my garbage. I am my own garbage man.

Alicja: I live in a state of mind where I'm like, "I don't want to go eat there because they're going to try to bring my kids water in styrofoam cups and I'm going to have to say, 'No styrofoam' three or four times and they're going to be like, 'Huh?'—'We just want regular cups.'" I have to be that person all the time. So the waiter came back and everyone had styrofoam cups. My husband was living in Portland, Ore. for a long time before we met, thirteen years ago or so, but when he came to Memphis, I took him to a Tops Bar-B-Q and he was like, "I didn't know they still made styrofoam." He didn't even have any clue that it was still allowed. I was like, "Oh, they love it around here. It keeps your ice so cold. You'll find it everywhere."

Lori: Your barbeque plate, it's got to hold a lot of heft. Barbeque's big in Memphis, so it soaks up the paper plate pretty good. You gotta go with styrofoam.

Alicja: And it's cheap and it's owned by Dow. Yeah, Memphis has a lot of trash thrown around, and you can just be driving down the

street and someone has totally just put their garbage out of their car and I'll be like, "I know your car's not clean inside! I know you could have kept that garbage with you for just a little bit longer and put it with all the other garbage on the floor in your car."

Todd: I've learned that people don't respond well to that line of inquiry in Los Angeles.

Alicja: Oh yeah. I'd be terrified to actually say something to the person.

Todd: "Hey, you dropped something." Not a good opening line with a lot of people... I don't want to say that everybody's older in this room here, but everybody is older here.

Alicja: Yeah, I'm the oldest of the old here.

Eli: I'm not.

Todd: How old are you Eli?

Eli: Thirty-one.

Alicja: He's feeling especially young around us, too.

Lori: He's our bass player, equipment manager, and the technician.

Todd: How do you intentionally enjoy things as you get older without losing grasp of reality—which is a direct quote from you, Alicja. [laughter]

Alicja: I posed it as a question? I didn't say "how."

Todd: You didn't say "how." That was mine.

Alicja: Okay. Yeah.

Todd: You're all artists. You all are approaching creative endeavors for a long period of time. One way of doing that is you can tap into your childhood, but since you're an adult, you have more responsibilities. You have bills to pay. How do you realize, "I want to keep on creating, I want to remain happy," and still be a responsible human being?

Rich: I don't write as many songs anymore because it has gotten busy and I've started a business. The focus has definitely been on that, but I still keep a music room in the back of my house. All the amps are there, the drum set's set up, the organ is there, the posters are there. So as soon as I open that door, it's pretty easy for me to go to that world again. I have to have something to trigger that for me. If not, I'll forget about it. And it just takes Alicja giving me a phone call saying, "Hey, you want to do some shows?"

Alicja: Since I became a parent, everything changed. Just changing your sleeping schedule changes everybody who you're in touch with. I also do visual arts. Everything for me—I call it "maintenance." "I gotta do this, I gotta maintain." I'll never have the time or the desire to just sit down with a guitar for two hours and practice and make up stuff, or to spend a whole day recording. It's just gotta be done in short periods of time. To be in an art studio and just stay there all day, fall asleep on the floor, and then get up and stare at it and see what you want to change—I don't think I'll have that time in my life anymore. It's just about maintenance because we started something and I want to see it through.

Also, for me, everyone talks about how great meditation is for them. I was talking to this one lady and she really explained to me that she's been doing it all her life. She's in her seventies. Finally, I was like, "I just can't do it." And she's like, "Well, maybe you meditate when you're doing art or music." And I realized that's when I worked everything out in my head. It re-files, it feels good, I feel like weight has been lifted off me. If I sit down and record a song or draw for an hour—which rarely happens—whatever I get out of it, it's like a weight's lifted off me. My brain's reorganized, like the same way sleep works.

Lori: For me, my husband Jared McStay, he's been in a lot of bands through the years as well, the Simpletones.

Todd: Not the L.A. Simpletones.

Lori: No, 'cause he had to change it to the Simple Ones. And he was in the Wuvbirds with me. We had a cover band called The Villains for a while. He has endless energy for music, so he's really been an inspiration for me. Sometimes he literally has to pick me up off the couch to practice. "Let's book a show, c'mon, c'mon." And he works at the shop, so it's in his best interest to get to know all the new, younger musicians in town. They're his best friends now. He goes to see all their gigs.

Alicja: He's going out on Monday night, Tuesday night. And he does shows at the shop all the time. That involves not just having the bands and organizing the event, it involves him setting up the whole PA and a tent and everything outside.

Lori: And prepping the store for a sale. Even when we have Relentless Breeze come to practice, it's at our house. We've got a big space and every time he's like, "I got to go set up the band room."

Alicja: Never bugs him.

Lori: I'm like, "Isn't it set up already?" He's got to get it just so. So he's really helped me stay with it. Otherwise, I don't know if I would've kept going. I'm not as big of a songwriter as these guys are, but I'm always writing little micro songs, little tunes I sing to the cats and stuff like that. [laughter]

Todd: It's nice that—especially in Los Angeles—there are people who are in their sixties who are still very creative and are still making new music and supporting others. Punk's one of the genres of music—on certain levels—that doesn't just discard old people.

Alicja: Maybe I'm going to be embarrassing myself by saying this, but we were talking in the van last night: "When I used to play shows, there'd be guys hitting on me after. It's not happening anymore." Our motivation is a little bit different, because when you're younger, having people put you a little bit up on a pedestal is a kind of motivation. It's just a different thing when you're older. Last night I was like, "I'll go to the merch table." I've always done this after we played. And some people are like, "You have to go sell the merch of your band right after you play?"—not with this band, but it used to be that way with Lost Sounds—like as if it was a sexist thing. I'd be like, "I like selling merch. I have a record label and I have a lot of stuff to sell. I like talking to people there."

Lori: "I'm making money."

Alicja: Sometimes I'll play and then I'll go to the merch table and they'll be like, "So what was that band called and where are they from?" And I'll be like, "Well, *we're* from Memphis." [laughter] So, uh, yeah. No one noticed me.

Rich: You said I'm attracting older women now.

Alicja: Oh man, Rich is.

Rich: I enjoy talking to older ladies.

Lori: Rich has a boyish charm. He really does. He's got a twinkle in his eye.

Rich: I just asked the lady at the antique store where was the old candle shop that used to be there. And she goes, "We've lost so much over the years." And I go, "Oh, that's too bad 'cause I really liked the candle shop 'cause I used to dip my dick... [laughter, catches himself] Oh, that's funny. My Dad said, "When you grew up, just remember if you're going to dip your wick..."

Alicja: Don't say it backwards…

Rich: "...use a rubber." That was just a slip. I used to go dip my fingers into the waxer and just coat my fingers. And I was hoping to do that again. [laugher]

Lori: That's why you wanted to go there?

Rich: Did I derail that or what?

Todd: I've never been to a candle shop where you can stick your fingers in their wax.

Rich: If you're a kid, it's something to do. It's a sensation like no other. Once the first layer has dried—assorted colors.

Alicja: Rainbow.

Rich: And if you'd go for it, you can do your whole hand. That's kind of frowned upon, but...

Lori: If there's anyone who could get away with it as an adult though, it'd be you.

Todd: I think when you get older, you can get away with a lot more shit.

Rich: I love it.

Lori: You become invisible almost. I kind of like that.

Alicja: You're not suspicious anymore. You're responsible. You get a little credit with age. You're probably here to spend some money.

Rich: Dip the wick.

Lori: And then the young guys in Memphis, these young musicians who are absolutely incredible. Alicja and I have a bass player in Alicja-Pop. I think he just turned thirty, but Jared's in the band and he's literally the same age as that guy's father. But they're all peers. I go see their show and they'd give me a big hug and they're all excited we're there. They're real sweet, talented guys and gals. There are a lot of gals out there.

Alicja: Yeah. Actually, there are a lot of self-motivated people right now. We totally have no clue why, but Memphis bars take care of bands financially. It used to be two hundred was good pay. Now we're spoiled.

Rich: Here's "Money Talk with Alicja" again.

Alicja: When we do a show in Memphis, we've got to bring in guys from out of town who have to take off work and spend money on gas and stuff like that. So it's pretty easy to get them to come to Memphis and say we're

going to get four hundred dollars. They're not going to come for nothing, understandably. Because you gotta make sure you're not inconveniencing everyone around you.

Lori: Big Red (their tour van) takes a lot of gas.

Todd: So Rich, what's your job now?

Rich: We were living in Chicago, and my wife and I had an opportunity to move to a farm in middle Tennessee, in between Chattanooga and Nashville. It's a town called Altamont. We raise animals and produce and honey all that good stuff. And we do farmer's markets. I don't have many friends anymore because they're nowhere to be found.

Alicja: It's a Mennonite community.

Rich: So my friends are the Mennonites now that live in the community.

Alicja: Remember, you had this one guy who would come over and he'd like to use your internet? [laughter] Because he couldn't have it.

Rich: [in Mennonite accent] "So, Brother Rich, do you think I could use your internet? Uh, there's a telescope we'd like to purchase for the farm. We have some out-of-towners coming through and they really would like to see what this sky has to offer here. [laughter] We've heard that the internet can maybe speed that process up for us. Could we come in and use your internet?" "Yeah, have at it." They don't know how to use it, you have to sit them down, walk them through it. "I think the model TS 300's what we've decided upon."

Todd: Awesome.

Rich: "Okay. Hey, uh, how'd that telescope work out?" "It's beautiful." But I get my feed from them, so I've established a relationship with these guys and they're really cool. You can learn *a lot* from these guys.

Alicja: Tell him about your well.

Rich: So my father-in-law contacted this guy who drills water wells. The guy came over with this—oh god, it was crazy—it was like an old pulley drill from the '40s, and it's still operating. All these belts. [Makes sound of heavy machinery starting and gaining RPM.]

Alicja: You said he was a dowser.

Rich: Well, yes. Before all that, he came out and he dowsed for the water.

Todd: Oh, he divined with the rod?

We're riding the microchips in those black suits that we got at the mall.

They looked like a real poor man's Judas Priest suit or something.

Rich: He goes, "That's it." He broke off a stick from a branch from a tree. "That's where you're going to find your water." That was his job. He was out. Then the other guy, his brother probably, came in and drilled the well. Sure enough, there's water.

Todd: You've got the internet. They've got a stick. Even.

Alicja: Who's more advanced there?

Todd: So, talking about different generations, what has been the arc of your parents accepting you're a musician? Or have they?

Rich: Oh, for me it's been one hundred percent supportive since forever. The arc? I think I told my dad, "Yeah, if this isn't panning out for me by the time I'm thirty, I'm out." He still reminds me of that. He goes, "How's that working out for you there, kid?" Still chugging along.

Alicja: I'm a little bit older than Rich and my parents were a little bit older. My mom had me when she was thirty-two or thirty-three, which was old for that time. Now that's the norm; if not, it's even younger than people have kids. But my parents have always been annoyed and upset by me playing music. They don't want to listen to it. You don't have to feel sorry for me. I think that's been part of the deal.

Rich: Your mom never came to a show?

Alicja: No. But she saw the insert for the lyrics for *Black Wave* once and started crying. She was like, "Oh, it's so disturbing."

Rich: Alicja's mom said one time, "Oh, you guys sound like Alice Cooper to me."

Alicja: Oh, okay. I think she only knew Alice Cooper from being on *The Muppets*. Everyone knew who he was.

Rich: I thought it was pretty progressive that your mom boiled it down to Alice Cooper.

Todd: What do your parents do, Alicja?

Alicja: Well, my mom was a teacher when she was younger and then a mom, and then she became an architect for office and commercial spaces as we got a little older. She did that for a long time. Then she was a traveling salesperson. As my parents got divorced, my dad was always in commercial property, real estate.

Todd: They didn't see—living in Memphis—music would be a possible viable way to make a living?

Alicja: My mom loves symphony concerts and things like that. But music's not a big thing in either of their lives. Their whole record collection fit in the table right under the record player. My dad's a little bit more of an intellectual reader kind of person back in his day. My brother's a scientist and a professor. I was kinda looked at as the person in the family who was choosing the fucked-up life. There was a time where they were just like, "If you haven't made a career in this by the time you're thirty, you've got to stop." [to Rich] You made that for yourself, which is funny.

Rich: That was a life goal at one point.

Alicja: They wouldn't see, "Oh, she works really hard at this. She's learned how to play all this stuff." It was not accepting of who I was. And then now—since I have kids—anyone who has a kid knows that they are their own personality and their own person and there's not shit you can do about that. And it was something that maybe parents of my generation didn't know yet. It was like, "You control who your child will be."

Lori: Well, my dad's a super nerd for any music I do. [laughter]

Alicja: He's at every show?

Lori: Usually, he and his wife, they're like, "Oh, we'll have to leave around eight or nine." Then one o'clock in the morning rolls around, they're still partying, having a great time. Well, the only reason he hasn't come to see Sweet Knives is just I haven't played with y'all enough, and they can't go to a start-late show. But with Relentless Breeze, he'll come, 'cause we usually play seven o'clock or so. We know our audience.

Todd: The perfect yacht rock slot right there. An early berthing.

Lori: He's brought friends that come see us play. I've inspired him. Well, I don't know if it's necessarily me. He's always wanted to learn to play music, stringed instruments. He can sing really well. But all last year, he secretly learned how to play bass, even asking our bass player for tips. He even played a few gigs at his church with his pals and didn't tell me until New Year's Day. He had one of his pals come over and he's bringing some guitars. And my dad's like, "Oh, maybe I'll try jamming. Sure. Yeah." So we're two songs in, my dad keeps looking back at me like, "Hey, are you going to notice?" It took two songs for me to go, "You're singing and playing bass. What are you doing?" My dad was looking at me like a little kid doing a recital. I come in and he's like, "Oh, she's here!" I try not to make eye contact 'cause I don't want to mess him up. So cute.

Then I got to go to some of their gigs at the church for the potluck. His buddies who play with them, their wives are all like, "What'd you think of the big reveal?" He'd been planning it for a year. It's crazy. His little buds, they're asking me for tips and I'm like, "Maybe don't be eight feet apart, like come in a little closer"—they don't have a drummer. Tweak this. You know, you're too quiet over here. It's funny.

John: My parents are very supportive of most stuff I've done, but they never come to see shows. I think my dad came to a Lost Sounds show once. He thought Jay was a spazz and he just couldn't handle it. He just called us hippies.

Todd: Oh wow.

John: He's an old hippie himself. He didn't really get it, so I never invite him to anything I'm doing.

Todd: Hippies? Huh.

John: They're sweet parents.

Alicja: [to Eli] What are your parents like? You're almost twenty years younger than me.

Eli: Parents and music?

Todd: Were they supportive of your creativity? Did they think it was a waste of time?

Eli: No. Let's see. My mom got me a mini gut string classical guitar when I was nine or ten. I played it in the string orchestra at school, like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," stuff like that. Wrote my first song on that, which is called the "Mr. Happy Blues," which was about Lorena Bobbitt. [laughter] It went, "Woke up this morning/ felt something was wrong/ looked under the blanket/ and Mr. Happy was gone." [laughter] Yeah. [laughter]

And then my dad got me my first electric guitar, which was a plywood copy of a BC Rich Bich, which was fucking rad. Like from a—remember catalogs? It was a brand that also did like, little guitars with a built-in speaker. They were pretty cool. So yeah, my dad died right after I started playing shows, so I don't think he ever saw one. But my mom's always supportive. Passively supportive.

Todd: What's that mean?

Eli: Here's the thing, I had a lot of alone time growing up. I just did my own thing and I'm like, "Mom, going to play a show." She's like, "What? Okay." Parents are fine.

Alicja: I just want to add one little thing on that, 'cause I am a parent. So many people who are into rock'n'roll, they dress their kids in the bands they like T-shirts. I don't push it on my kids at all. They can be listening to Cardi B or the freakin' *Frozen* soundtrack. I don't care what they want to listen to. I want them to come to what they like on their own without me trying to tell them anything. If they want to ask me, fine. But I just want to see it happen on its own, whatever's going to happen.

Todd: "I invested in that Black Flag onesie. Appreciate them."

"So, Brother Rich, do you think I could use your internet? Uh, there's a telescope we'd like to purchase for the farm."

Rich: Alicja's mom said one time, "Oh, you guys sound like Alice Cooper to me."

Alicja: **I think she only knew Alice Cooper from being on *The Muppets*.**

Alicja: It's not like, "You gotta go to School of Rock. You gotta be playing this instrument. You got to learn this." No, if you decide to pick it up on your own, you can pick it up on your own.
Todd: So is there any band you guys have discovered because someone else compared you to that band?
Alicja: Well, I think The Screamers was one those bands. I hadn't heard about them.
Lori: My Mom said I sound like Cher when I sing. I don't know if that's true or not. [laughter]
Rich: But you knew who Cher was.
Lori: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
Alicja: I've been told my voice sounds like Madonna and I'm just like, "What?" That was random and a long time ago, but I thought that was strange.
Todd: I just want to throw this out. I don't even have a question. Alicja, one of your girls is in taekwondo?
Alicja: Oh yeah. They both do it.
Todd: And then one of them spelled "Violet love Alicja" with pretzels, which is pretty cool. [laughter] Pretty nice.
Alicja: Yeah. That was sweet.
Todd: Rodents keep on showing up in your music. Sweet Knives has the song "Rat in the City." Lost Sounds: *Rat's Brains and Microchips*. Two questions. How are humans descended from rats and your best rat trivia and/or best rat escape story?
Rich: "Rat in the City." Did you ever hear the story about the Chicago older fella who lived in the house that we used to dog-sit at? He would capture the rats in sort of like a fryer basket and then dip them into a vat of water and kill them that way.
Everyone: Awws. Ooof.
[Rich laughs off mic.]
Alicja: I think I was watching a show, which was like "Ten Animals with the Most Amazing Survival Skills." Then I saw this thing about rats and they can just chew their way through a pipe. I knew that we're—by DNA—very close to a rat or a rodent.

So when I had a new week-old baby in my house, I heard this bubbling in the toilet and I was like, "What the fuck's going on in the bathroom?" There's a rat swimming in our toilet. And I was like, "What do I do, what do I do?" So I went and got a big cup, a bucket, a piece of cardboard, and maybe a brick. Maybe some tape. I brought it to the bathroom, I scooped the rat out. Got it in the bucket really quick and put the cardboard on top, taped it, and put it outside until someone came home. When someone got home, I drove off and let the rat out at the park. Everyone was like, "Why didn't you kill it?" And I was like, "Why am I supposed to kill this guy?" He made it all the way through the water to my toilet.
Todd: He's a survivor.
Alicja: I admire that. I did this again more recently. My dogs cornered a rat in our backyard. It was so funny because I was feeding the birds and I remember looking out one day and seeing this cute little kind of bunny thing, hopping up to under the bird feeder. Hop, hop, hop, hop, back to this old backhouse. I was like, "We have a bunny in our backyard?" Then I was like, "That's a rat!" I never knew that rats hopped. They're always running, scurrying to not get caught. He was so comfortable living in that back shed and coming to this bird feeder. He just hopped along, this cute little rat. So eventually my dogs were pursuing this rat and they both cornered it, which meant I was able to catch it with a bucket. Once again, take it across the bridge and release it. I think they're interesting. They're gross.
Todd: They're fucking smart.
Rich: I just thought about that line in a "Rat's Brains and Microchips": "oily substance, like salad dressing." Jay sang it with such conviction.
Alicja: Picture the bottle, cold in the fridge that you get a shake up to get it uncongealed with those little red Italian spices in it.
Rich: So silly.
Alicja: But on the Sweet Knives album, I think there's possibly seven canine references.
Rich: Animal lovers here.
Alicja: Maybe five. Yeah.
Todd: So in Lost Sounds, you said that you cover social events, but in a way that nobody was aware of. Until recently, I didn't realize Lost Sounds had a song about Columbine.
Alicja: Oh yeah, yeah.
Rich: "Blackcoats/Whitefear."
Todd: Is there a Sweet Knives song that does that also?
Alicja: There's this one song called, "Isolation Deprivation," and no one in this band knows what it's about, but in Memphis about two years ago—there's a place that has outdoor shows called the Shell, in a park. It's a really popular place to go for events and the shows are over around nine o'clock at night. They're for people to bring their lawn chairs and wine; kid, family friendly. So after an event, a girl was walking to her car and two people nabbed her. Right as she was getting in the car, they took her keys and they stuck her in the trunk of her car. She was driven around in the car. People were like, "Well, she was stupid. She shouldn't have been leaving the event alone at 11:30 at night."
Todd: Victim blaming.
Alicja: Then there was an article where the girl actually described what happened. Somehow she got to a stoplight and got out of the trunk. Well, we finally found out she was living in the backhouse of our neighbors. It was the girl who would come over and babysit our kids. It was someone I knew. She doesn't live there anymore, but she was from a big city elsewhere and she's not the kind of person that would just be dumb. So the song is about that feeling of helplessness. It was already terrifying to read the story and then to see it was this sweet girl next door that came to do Teach for America. Our schools are desperate for hopeful teachers to come in and teach these kids. They're just really good-hearted people. She ended up leaving early. I think it traumatized her. The song was my way of working that out in my head.
Todd: Something lighter. Alicja, how's it feel to see a picture of yourself playing guitar in the Memphis International Airport?
Alicja: Aw, man. It's fine.
Todd: Is it part of a permanent exhibit?
Alicja: Yeah, it's at the baggage claim area so people see it all the time. It's kinda funny.
Lori: She forgets about it until someone's like, "I saw you at the airport!"
Alicja: I'm always like, "Oh, they got a picture of me with my face frowning." They had us all set up on this huge stage, ten people or so. And it definitely has this appearance that we're all Photoshopped into our own corner because we've all got black space between us. So, I'm just a little critical of the photograph itself, but it's really nice. I think that in Memphis, there's a lot of people who really make me feel good about that I've made some kind of contribution, even if it isn't really all that recognized, you know?
Lori: Yeah. I tell people all the time, I play with a girl whose picture's in the airport.
Todd: It's the number one cargo airport in America, because of FedEx.
Lori: Not so much passengers.
Alicja: So as long as people put their bags on the plane, they're going to see me. If you're a carry-on kind of person, you might not see me.
Todd: Do you think that there's a divide between Jay's music and yours?
Alicja: I have to say that as much as I was done playing music with Jay, I was really excited for him when he started getting big. And Jay has got some kind of special effect on certain people, where he has super fans. I know the reality of the situation that Jay will always be—maybe—he's probably better than me. I'm not going to make like, "Oh, I'm not as good as him," kind of thing. He is what he is. We're two totally different things and people tell me all the time—I was talking to a guy last night, he was in his mid-twenties, and he was like, "I learned about who you guys were from Jay. I didn't know who Jay was 'til after he died." I'm just like, that's good. It's fine for me. What do you think? [Turns to Rich and then Todd.]
Todd: It's hard to say, because if a musician dies early, one of two big things can happen: they get completely forgotten or they become lionized.
Alicja: I don't know the perception. Is he getting forgotten?
Todd: No.
Alicja: Are more people learning about him?
Todd: Yeah, I think so. I just don't know if people realize what a contribution of three people Lost Sounds was. It wasn't Jay was the leader and everybody else followed. Because of his solo records, people may think that was pulling all the weight in Lost Sounds too.
Alicja: For sure, it's totally obvious to me that so many people think that he was in charge of all the recordings, he was in charge of everything, and I'm all like, whatever. Maybe I'm just a little bit odd in the situation where I had to have my fingers in everything and try everything and play everything and

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record everything. I pick up on that people think he recorded all the albums, stuff like that. Now, he's a great recordist. You can tell by the stuff I record without him that his sound is on everything.

Todd: I'm trying to balance my assessment. Is there misogyny involved? Is it because you're a woman that you're not more recognized? And I don't know the answer to that.

Alicja: Somebody asked me recently about that, 'cause there was an article in a Memphis magazine about how women don't get any credit. And I was like, "Well, it can hurt you in some ways. In other ways, it can help you. It's easier to remember that there's this girl singing..." It just hasn't been my plight. I'm just going to make stuff and throw it out there and do what I do. Lori would definitely be the first female who I have ever toured with.

Lori: And this is my first real tour.

Alicja: But she's been to all these places already on vacation.

Todd: I remember a story where things went bad at a Lost Sounds show. You don't get paid and you, Alicja, get punched out but by a man. It might just be the era that it happened in, because if it happened today, it wouldn't stand. It would be a lot different reaction.

Alicja: Yeah. That was funny. It makes for a good story, though.

Todd: The weird thing about that story is the guy had such a huge goiter on the back of his neck.

Rich: It was a goiter! He had hair on it and it was bleached.

Alicja: It was the time of SisQó, so he'd bleached his hair out.

Rich: "The time of SisQó." [laughter] "The Thong Song." Alicja always references the guy who punched her out to a mini SisQó on the back of his head.

Alicja: I called it a puff mullet 'cause his goiter was where his hairline was. "That's a goiter, Alicja, a goiter." Oh, I've got bad eyesight. It was nighttime.

Lori: And he punched you? I don't know this story.

Alicja: Lost Sounds were at a show in Detroit and we were supposed to be playing with the Piranhas. A booker for a different show had booked a Vibrators show close by, in Detroit. No one was showing up, so he comes down: "Can we put them on your show?" And we're like, "Well, I guess they can play here." We never really liked the idea anyway, but somehow it ended up happening. And then at the end, when the money situation came, he wanted all the money to go to The Vibrators.

Todd: What?

Alicja: So that was where the issue—when the bar was paying us—I remember a nervous female bartender: "Um, well, he wants the money for that band." And I'm just like, "Well, no." I've been drinking a little bit.

Rich: Don't mess with her money.

Alicja: I was like, "Well, that's not fair at all. They jumped on our show. They even used our equipment."

Rich: You gotta tell about the phaser. Side stories.

Alicja: Oh yeah. So this is where you find the sexism in music. The guitar player wanted to use my amp and I was like, "Well, let me show you how to use it." He's like, "No, no, no. I know how to use an amp. Go away." You-can't-tell-me kind of thing. So I left. I was like, "Okay, well I need to fix the..." "No, I could do it." So I was like, okay, "Well, I left the phaser on from our last song, and there's no pedal and you've got to do a certain thing to turn it off." So the whole show's like [makes long, loud phaser sound].

Rich: [In English accent] "I've got this, love. Carry on, now."

Alicja: He's probably younger than I am now. He had curly black hair, kind of longish, semi thinning out, and Jay was like, "And then the guitar player looked like Jimmy Page's nutsack." [laughter]

Rich: "Jimmy Page's nutsack." And I've always thought about that, right? That's accurate, but I'm wondering why Jimmy Page?

Alicja: Because Jimmy Page's hair was the same.

Rich: Was he referencing the *Outrider* cover? Remember that record that Jimmy Page did? 'Cause the '80s nutsack. [laugher]

Alicja: It makes so much sense until you start to think about it too hard.

Eli: Like jazz.

Rich: Because the guy was British, did that have something to do with it?

Alicja: I think he had Jimmy Page's hairstyle. You just picture it. You don't have to describe it.

Eli: Every man's nutsack is just a smaller wrinkly version of his head. [laughter]

Rich: But the fight came down to money.

Alicja: So out of nowhere, the guy who brought The Vibrators over was angry with me and he just took a bottle or a pint glass or something and just whacked me in the backside of the head. It was the kind of thing where I was like knocked out, so fell on over to a couch. There was the bar, the bar seating, a walkway, and then a couch on the other side. I remember passing out and then the male bartender comes, and he grabs me. I don't know how he lifts me up—under the arms or something. He's like, "You gotta get out of here." For protection. He brings me outside. Rich comes out of the bathroom. He's like, "It's like the old West in here."

Rich: Jay was fighting. John was in a tangle. You were out cold. I was outside 'cause I used to smoke back then. I came back in and it was like [banjo sounds] glasses being slid across the bar. Ladies of the night were throwing people down stair rails. [laughter] Heads were coming out of walls, drinking there, and then going back to the fight.

Alicja: Jay had just been in the bathroom doing coke with one of the guys in the band that had nü metal dreadlocks. They came out, saw what was happening and were like, "We've got to fight each other. We're enemies now." [laughter] When I was outside, this booker came out the back door and he's found himself a piece of concrete and he's just walking away, but keeping his front to us and showing the concrete as he escapes down the street.

Rich: I remember that. Yeah.

Alicja: That's hilarious. I know Jay got punched in the ear 'cause his ear was bleeding. And then The Guilty Pleasures, so they were on some kind of pills to make them woozy. They were like, "Okay, follow us. We're going back to our buddy's place." And then the van just took off and left us. So next thing we know we're by mistake hopping on the interstate, going to Canada and there's no turning back. [laughter] Then we get to the border. We've got blood coming out of our ears. I don't know what our money situation is like. Everybody's pretty drunk and there are bottles in the car. They stop us. Was that when you got harassed about only having four dollars on you? Yeah, they harassed Rich. They're like, "Well, if you're going to visit Canada, what are you going to do after you spend your four dollars?" He was like, "I was going to borrow some money from her." [laughter]

Rich: Which I thought was quite sensible at the time.

Alicja: So after this fight, we're so tired. We just had to drive three hours through Canada.

Lori: Wow. I didn't realize the accidental Canada trip was the same night.

Todd: I just have one more question. This is a direct quote from Alicja. "I think I speak for the band that we want long, healthy lives. We don't want to live recklessly and have our lives end early as Jay's did." Alicja, you mentioned you jog once in a while, that you guys have cut down on your bread. Stuff like that.

So many people who are into rock'n'roll, they dress their kids in the bands they like T-shirts. I don't push it on my kids at all.

I don't care what they want to listen to.

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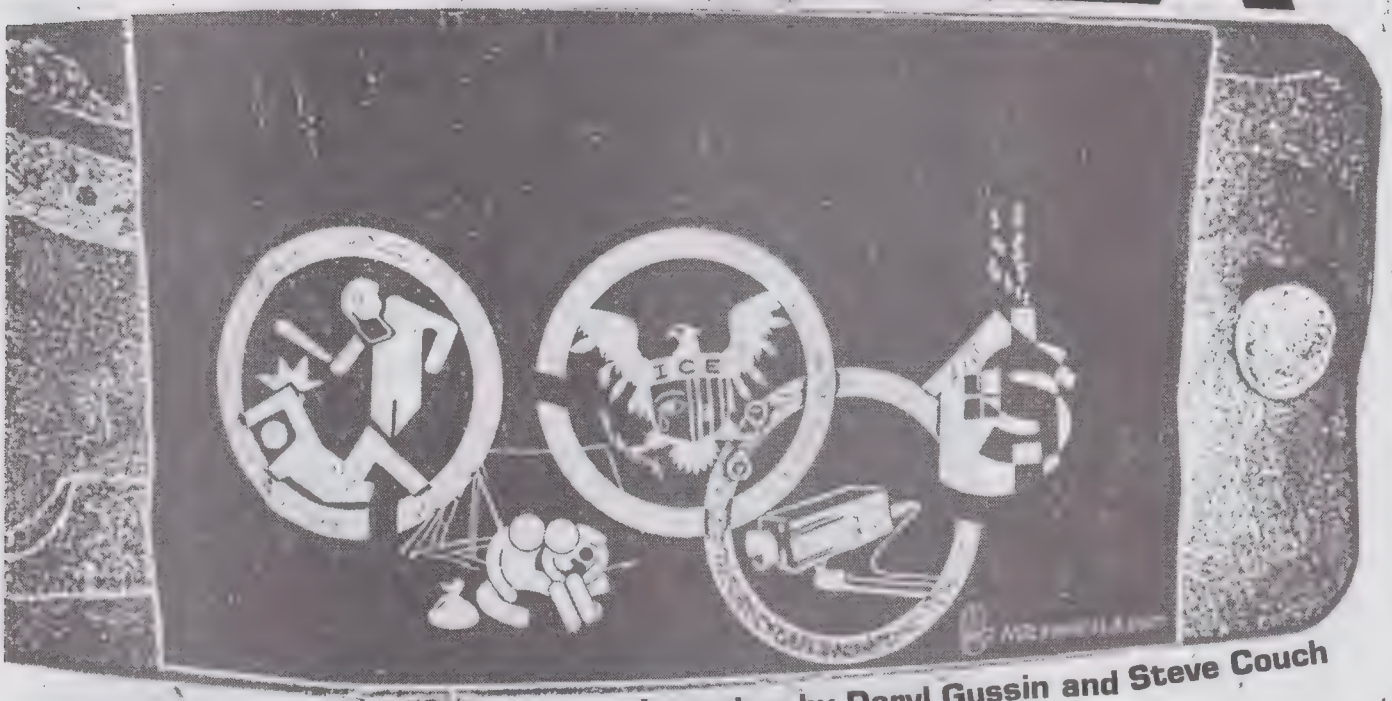
Alicja: [in old voice] We're taking our vitamins.
Todd: It's sensible because as you get older, you want to continue being in this mode. "What things can I do that are maybe a little nerdy or mom and dad type of stuff?"
Alicja: There's so much more to do with your life than just grow up, go to school, and be in a band.
Rich: Yeah. It's pretty cool. These guys are so sick of me talking about it and I'm not as on top of it as I used to be, but I got to be like, 188 and I felt, "That's heavy for me. I'm going to lose some weight."
Alicja: I'm not sick of you talking about that. Never, never heard you mention it.
Rich: But what happened was, you choose whatever diet works for you. I found one that worked for me and that's all we could talk about. That was very nerdy and very annoying to other people who aren't involved in anything like that. But it was important to me to do it. And I figured out how to do it. So I stay on top of that. She and I ran three miles the other day. We swam in the ocean yesterday. She jogs on tour.
Alicja: I skipped this morning and I was opting for sleep. We had a tour we had to cancel because I was playing soccer and I injured my ankle. Then sciatica got me. As soon as I hurt my back, he [pointing to John] was down the hallway. He saw it and he was like, "Oooh, I know what that was." 'Cause it just happened to him nine months before.
John: I could tell you just pulled your back out. "Oh, there goes our tour."
Alicja: And it did. That was the end of it. We had to call it. So that's me being like, "Oh this is real. This is what happens when you get old. Your back gets fucked up."
Todd: Shit breaks.
Alicja: It's really fucked up that I had to spend two weeks on all these muscle relaxers in bed, icing myself, just to finally be able to get up and go walk. That was a second wake up call for me. It was more recent, too. 'Cause I thought as long as I'm running and doing soccer and exercising and burning calories, it's one thing. But now I have to have do other things in my life. But, yeah, I want to have a long, long, long, long life.
Todd: One thing people who don't know much about punk and will just say it's "live fast, die young" type stuff—or throwing up on cats and kicking out toilets or whatever random, dumb shit they think about—is that some of the most important and dynamic music is made by people who have been in it for such a long time. When you go and sit down and do music, you have to realize you have a catalog of twenty-five years of songs in your head already. You have institutional knowledge and even if you aren't going in and practicing every day, you have a second or third act capability to continue making songs. And that's why I invited Sweet Knives here, because you're making new songs that are dynamic and really great. I think that has to be part of the conversation of music. Youth is great, but I don't like the cult of youth or the fetishization of youth, because so often when it happens, there's a tragic ending or people's attention spans are so short that you can't build infrastructure, you can't build resilient scenes. You can't have record stores that are lasting for decades, that kind of thing.
Rich: That's awesome. Oh, I wish I had your brain.
Todd: Maybe. Well, thank you so much, Sweet Knives.

It makes so much sense **until you start to think about it too hard.**

NOLYMPICS LA



Interview by Daryl Gussin and Steve Couch

In July of 2017 Los Angeles was "awarded" the 2028 Summer Olympics. It felt like a death sentence for working and middle class folks already struggling to keep their homes and neighborhoods intact in a city with such a visible housing crisis. Everyday more and more people are displaced, forced to relocate to neighboring inland counties or other states.

The campaign was spearheaded by Mayor Garcetti and the city council didn't push back against his maneuvers to gain the international spotlight. Actual public input was ignored while a highly questionable opinion poll was presented showing what statisticians refer to as "dictator numbers" in support of the event. In the end, decisions were made either not fully realizing the implications, or not caring about the citizens they were elected to represent. City council voted unanimously to support the bid to be the host city. The message was clear: Those at the top get what they want.

This isn't an attack on sports or athletes. This is about politicians making dirty decisions that bear dire consequences for a massive amount of people, all in the name of something completely avoidable and unnecessary.

So Mayor Garcetti and the L.A. City Council, do the right thing: Let both sides of the argument be presented and put it to a vote. This is reasonable and totally possible. Let the citizens of Los Angeles decide whether or not we want our city to be gutted in the name of a "hotel shortage crisis." Let the citizens of Los Angeles decide whether or not we want the L.A.P.D. to be under the control of the Department of Homeland Security (including I.C.E.) for an undisclosed amount of time. Let us decide whether or not this is a city dictated by developers, or a city that works for the good of the people.

Referendum *now!*

In this interview Steve and I sat down with three organizers from NOlympics LA to discuss how we got to where we are now, the disaster looming on the horizon, and what we can do to prevent it.

Intro and layout by Daryl

NOlympics LA organizers: David Quattrocchi, Joanna Swan, and Michael Steinborn.

The more you learn about it, it's pretty hard not to oppose.

Daryl: $6,900,000,000 for a two-week party—this is something you think is a bad idea? [laughs]
Michael: Correct.
Steve: [sarcastically] Why? It sounds great. [laughs]
David: I don't think it's something anyone thinks is a good idea once they know what happens. When the Olympics polled people and actually got some info out in front of them to make a more educated decision on what they wanted, or even if they wanted this or not, the approval rate goes down the more info people have. Not only is it an exorbitant amount, but the "two-week party" is precipitated by a decade of devastation on communities. We as taxpayers aren't on the hook for the money unless it goes over budget, which it probably will…
Michael: Because literally every Olympics has gone over budget since the '60s, I think.
Daryl: And that falls on state taxes?
Michael: Yeah, the state tax payer. So people in Fresno will be footing the bill for the L.A. Olympics. And that money cannot be used for housing. Any profits Garcetti claims—he says we're going to make a billion dollars on the Olympics, which is like a Trumpian statement—it's not based on anything. And even if it did make a profit, that money would go to the LA84 Foundation, which is a non-profit that was established to take the profit from the '84 Games, but in reality is more like a real estate money-laundering scheme. They fund swimming lessons, which is their big thing, and youth sports.
Daryl: And I know the *L.A. Times* has a big hand in supporting the 2028 Olympics. Don't the LA84 Foundation and the *L.A. Times* have some dubious connection?
Michael: They do. [laughs] I'm not super in the weeds on what it is, but I know there are connections. The new owner of the *Times* has specific ties and that's why we don't see honest coverage in the *Times*—either of Garcetti, the Olympics, or even just homelessness. It's all wrapped up in real estate investments.
Steve: Something David mentioned is that you don't see the ten years leading up to the Olympics and the kind of harm that comes along with the build up. What is that harm that happens to a city when they decide to host the Olympics?
Daryl: And what we also have to make note of right off the bat is that Los Angeles is in the midst of a massive housing crisis, which will only perpetuate exponentially by the Olympic Games coming to the city.
Joanna: Definitely.
Michael: It's really just a question of, "Who is it for?" The Olympics are not for people who can't afford it. It's for elites. It's for people who do not live in Los Angeles, for the most part. We were in Tokyo meeting with other organizers against the Summer 2020 Games, in the first ever trans-national anti-Olympics summit, which was incredible. Everybody, from Korea to Brazil, had similar problems, if not the exact same problems we have.
Joanna: There's such a precedent for it. David and I were just in Atlanta for the DSA Convention (Democratic Socialists of America), where 30,000 people were evicted from their homes and thousands of public housing projects were demolished in the lead up to the '96 Olympics. The people in Tokyo and Seoul were speaking to that. It's interesting to see how many anti-Olympics activists in Japan are also unhoused, 'cause it really draws that connection.

In L.A., there are thousands of affordable housing units in every district that are at risk of being replaced by hotels or market-rate housing. We're already seeing it with the construction of what's called "The

When it comes to the referendum, the spirit of this group is that there has to be one. What ever it is, we're going to push, and we're going to find the crack.

Fig," which has already threatened, if not demolished, a number of units of affordable housing. Displaced a number of low income residents near USC. Now we're running a campaign in Hollywood, which has already been designated as the "Olympic staying area" where there will be "accommodations for the tourists." If you go to Hollywood, you see these concentrated areas with cranes on every corner. Those are not building public housing or affordable housing. They are building hotels for tourists.

Daryl: What happened on Whitley Avenue yesterday?

David: I was not there, but I know tenants were out protesting this very thing. I don't want to speak too much about the events without having been there.

Joanna: I know the big thing was that the landlord was sneakily trying to remove the stoves from the tenants' units because of some loophole that says as long as there's a stove, you can't push someone out. The tenants temporarily won yesterday because so many people from the community mobilized with the Hollywood local of the L.A. Tenants Union there that was really boosting that. It's a rent-stabilized residential hotel. It's being converted to a commercial operation where there's already ten other hotel projects.

David: We've been pretty steadily canvassing since the Homes Not Hotels campaign started. There are people who are protected by rent control, and they're being harassed daily in eight-story apartment buildings. And the landlords are just waiting to convert them into hotels—using any mechanism from harassment to Ellis Act Evictions—anything to get them out.

Michael: For the sake of clarity, what's the Ellis Act?

David: Let me tell you, Mike. [laughs] It's when a landlord deems that they're not going to be using their property for rental purposes so they can turn it into a business or whatever. And even if you're protected by California's rent control laws, this is a major loophole that a lot of people get fucked on. You lose all your rights as a tenant and have to kneel to it.

Daryl: Do you think this stuff would be happening with the same intensity if there wasn't the 2028 Olympics?

Michael: It would be happening, but not with the same intensity, because they point to the Olympics as the reason for these hotels. They've cited a "hotel shortage crisis." [laughs] That's real. The city council has said that in meetings. It's on city record.

David: Groups like the Tenants Union here in L.A. have redefined what the housing crisis is, which is about housing people. We have housing. There's no crisis with the actual housing—even affordable housing, which the Tenants Union has also exposed as a sham. We need permanent, supportive housing, or public housing.

Daryl: The structures are there.

David: We need a city council with a backbone to actually support the working class. Not tourists. People who have lived here for decades. Pretty much anyone who's just trying to fucking live.

Joanna: It's very telling that a number of people in city hall are being investigated for corruption, taking money from these people who are responsible for these evictions ultimately and responsible for homelessness. There's also the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) that we see around. There's about forty in L.A. and they are in any gentrified or gentrifying area made up of the most wealthy property owners. I was sitting in on a meeting for the South Park BID, which is one of the more powerful Downtown BIDs; the executive director was saying, "We need to improve our security budget because the Olympics are coming. I know it seems like it's far away, but it's not. There are a lot of things we could be doing." Which is businessperson speak for getting all these low income, primarily black people, off the street anywhere near where there might be some tourists.

David: Did you want to unpack BIDs on the street a little more for people who might not know what they look like? Since they have their own security.

Joanna: The red shirts?

David: Yeah.

Steve: Are those the guys rolling around on Segways?

Daryl: And bicycles.

Michael: They have different colored polo shirts.

Joanna: There have been a lot of lawsuits—BIDs have been sued, and the city by extension—because BIDs are public. They're funded with property taxes that the city has installed in that area. Everyone who's a business owner ends up paying for that BID, whether they're a part of it or not. In downtown, there were some lawsuits because of the aggressiveness of these BID patrols. In Hollywood they were handcuffing people to benches and calling the cops using "citizen's arrest," which you're not supposed to do for a misdemeanor. In some cases they were taking people back to their office in a car, which is essentially kidnapping. The Hollywood BIDs still carry guns, I believe. They dress like cops in Hollywood. They don't even have the colored shirts. We're going to see a lot more of this kind of pseudo, public-private security.

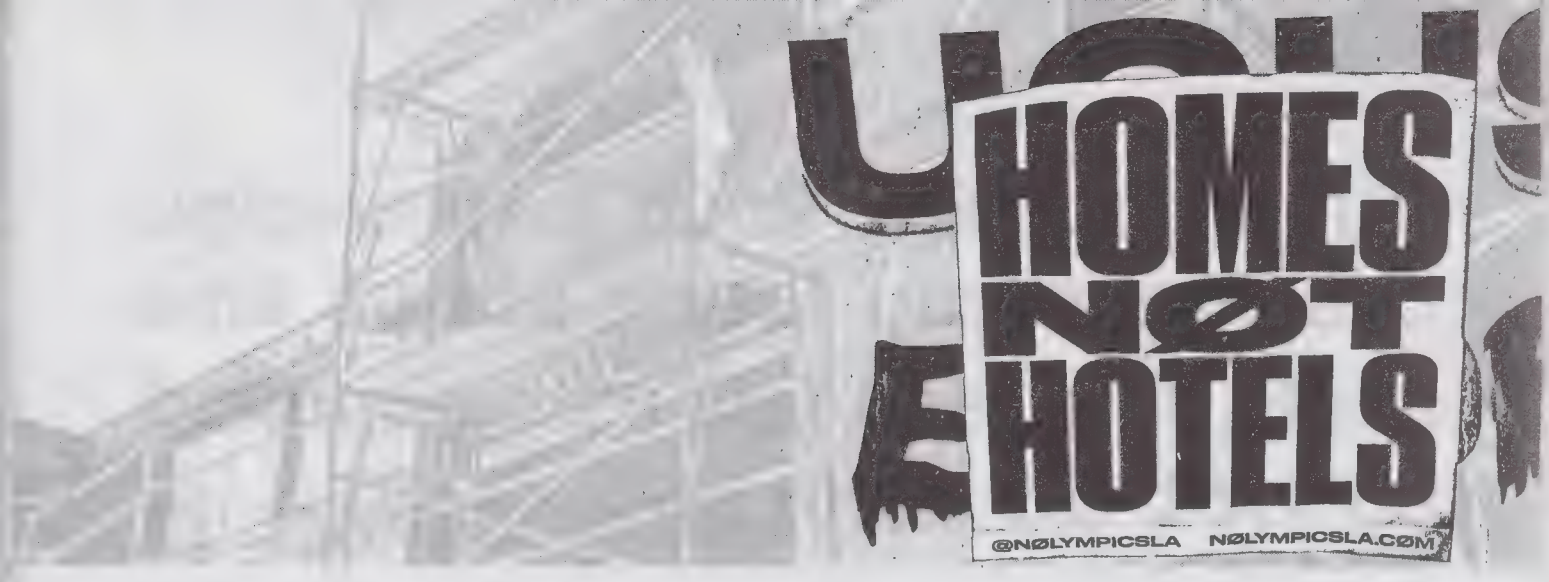
Daryl: So that's what separates them from a private security guard?

Joanna: Yeah, they're getting paid by property taxes.

Michael: One of those fun neoliberal loopholes. [laughs] Similarly in Tokyo, we were at an Olympic event that a journalist who was with us and I, for whatever reason, were allowed to go to. They had a booth set up outside of the private security firm that is doing security for the Tokyo Games. There was a wheel you could spin to win prizes. Pens and T-shirts. And also tactical helmets and body armor that children were putting on and posing for photos with. It was one of the most dystopian things I've ever seen. And to think we're not getting there here? We absolutely are. It is here.

Daryl: What else did you see in Tokyo that stands out?

Michael: It was really wild. Just the empty promises, I think. The event that we went to was called One Year To Go. There was nobody at this thing. It was press, the IOC (International Olympic Committee) members and whoever the hell else elites. Every speaker from Thomas Bach, president of the IOC, to the prime minister of Japan



Shinzō Abe, all made comments about how these are the "recovery games"—referring to the Fukushima nuclear disaster. But they never specifically called it out. They referred to an earthquake, a tsunami—they never mentioned the nuclear aspect of it. It was very bizarre framing, and the Olympic torch relay will start in Fukushima.

We had a film crew with us and some of them went on a tour to Fukushima. Everyone came back like they had seen ghosts: abandoned buildings everywhere, very radioactive. They had the top soil in big black garbage bags, thousands and thousands of them in fields. We heard a presentation at Sophia University from a professor who was explaining the payouts they gave people who were directly affected. They said it was like 8,000 to 20,000 yen, which is like $80 to $200. And I believe they said 40,000 people were displaced. And the IOC and the Japanese government are saying, "This is fine, let's have the Olympics."

Daryl: Meanwhile, allocating resources to the Olympics rather than repairing an entire city.

Michael: Exactly. They've implemented facial recognition and obscene surveillance. Every scary thing. Oh, and I can't not mention this: The 2028 L.A. Olympics will be designated a National Special Security Event, which will give control of LAPD to the Department of Homeland Security and I.C.E. for an undisclosed amount of time. This is for the seven hundred square miles of Southern California. We spoke with Alex Vitale who wrote the book *The End of Policing,* and he was like, "Yeah, absolutely expect Border Patrol to be checking IDs in subway stops far removed from venues." Look back, and so many people talk about the '84 Olympics like, "Oh yeah, everyone I knew went to jail."

Daryl: One of the craziest stories I've heard about the '84 Olympics was that this guy, who was like fourteen at the time, he said him and all his friends were indiscriminately picked up and taken to juvie for two weeks. And it was so overcrowded that they were sleeping on cots out on the field.

David: LA84 also has this buzz phrase, the "Play Equity Gap." Which I never thought was a mistake of how close it is to the "Pay Equity Gap." [laughs]

Joanna: It is not a mistake.

David: They take these phrases—we went to a city council meeting a month or two ago to talk to them about this, because like Mike said, they were earmarking funds for youth sports and swimming programs—and you know, "Can't we just close this 'Play Equity Gap' for these kids in South L.A.?!" The whole meeting was based around this presentation that has this video titled "Tourism Builds Community." [groans]

Joanna: It was the city tourism board.

David: And all of city council couldn't be more impressed by this presentation. You go outside and street vendors are being criminalized, but in the video they're taking images of people of color selling food outside and re-packaging it as catering to tourism, which will "help our city."

Joanna: I believe council member Joe Buscaino, who used to be a senior lead officer for LAPD, said "The greatest threat to tourism is homelessness." So they're really, really getting on that for the tourists.

Steve: [sarcastically] The right reasons.

Michael: The city council loves to pay lip service to solving homelessness and finding compassionate solutions, and will basically take our talking points and give them in press conferences and then turn around and do the opposite. It happens everyday. Garcetti is on record saying, "We do not criminalize homelessness." Meanwhile, city council last week unanimously voted to criminalize sleeping in vehicles, which 17,000 people in L.A. County do. Over night, those people have nowhere to go. They're going to get pushed out onto the street, or they're going to jail.

Steve: Where are the Olympics going in 2024?

All: Paris.

Steve: Have you learned anything meeting with Parisian resistors?

Michael: Yeah, Danielle Simonnet is running for mayor of Paris and her platform is a referendum on the Paris Games. She is awesome, super radical; we saw eye to eye on pretty much all politics. It's one of those things where the more you learn about it, it's pretty hard not to oppose. It's one of those things that people don't think about, and as soon as you think about it, it's like, "Oh yeah, fuck the Olympics." [laughs]

Daryl: Two common arguments that people have in favor of the Olympics are jobs and public transportation. More public transit is exciting, and will be used by the people of Los Angeles. But even nine years away, they've already said they're over budget and need another $3.3 billion.

Michael: Yeah, over budget and they've said they're not going to complete everything. And the transit stuff they're going to have to do anyway. Because of the Olympics they're specifically working on Westside transit and areas that connect the Valley to the Westside.

Joanna: Yeah, they wouldn't be able to get away with not increasing transit. But it's always the question of who benefits. And like the youth sports thing that David mentioned, in the same way I think about public transit. It's part of this Trojan horse for them to bring in all over the really horrible aspects. "Oh, look. We're doing all this stuff" that they definitely should be doing anyways. Of course low-income children in L.A. should have access to sports and camps and going swimming. That's cool!

Michael: But they should also have access to homes.

Joanna: Exactly. The divestment from things that will actually result in people's lives being improved is larger than the small gestures towards stuff that's not being done in good faith.

Michael: This is actually very similar to what we saw in Tokyo. They were unveiling the medals.

Daryl: Shiny things!

Michael: Yeah, and when they were unveiling them they were saying that they were made from recycled materials. [more groaning]

David: It's greenwashing.

Michael: If you don't think about it, it seems good. There's some environmental help. Activists from Korea were there with us, and for the Pyeongchang Games of 2018 they

Arm yourself with knowledge; the more you learn about this stuff, the less you're compelled to not do anything about it.

demolished a 6,400-year-old rainforest to build the ski run.
David: There you go.
Joanna: What was the other argument you said?
Daryl: Jobs.
Joanna: Well, all of the Olympics jobs are unpaid, volunteer positions.
Daryl: What?
Joanna: People who will be working at the Olympics will not be getting paid. They're all volunteer positions.
Steve: Really?
Michael: Yes. And in Japan, because of the extreme heat, they will have 200,000 "hospital volunteers." They said the phrase like everyone was supposed to know what that meant. And it's like, how about you pay fucking doctors if you're going to have to do this? They've already moved events to six in the morning.
Daryl: And that's just in preparation for how hot it's going to be?
Michael: Yes. Some of us were up at six in the morning and if you were outside for more than forty-five seconds, you'd start sweating. It was brutal. It was the most humid place I've ever been. And this was exactly one year before the games, so it'll be even hotter.
David: They also dangle union construction jobs to create tension between people in that sector and people who want to stay in their homes. Pitting people against each other.
Joanna: That's definitely part of our Homes Not Hotels campaign. Uniting labor with the tenants movement. Working class folks are dealing with housing issues. Those are often people who are in very precarious positions. And pitting labor against tenants just isn't going to work for the Olympics anymore. I'm excited by the support we've been able to start growing from that.

We've been in communication with people in Inglewood who are dealing with the new Rams stadium. Okay, that will bring some jobs, but what kind of jobs? Really low-paying service jobs with not enough hours. And now people have to commute an hour and a half to work there because they can't afford to live there anymore. It sucks because every time we go to city hall it takes time and is more complex than these talking points that the politicians are able to just throw out and wrap it up all nice with a little bow....
Daryl: And then do a full 180 when it comes to policy.
Joanna: Exactly. Just turn away from the actual situation on the ground.
Michael: Even the council members who are somewhat receptive to our talking points, and there are a few who now we know if they were to go back and vote again on the Olympics, some of them would at least... not show up. [laughs] Which to me is a total coward move.
Joanna: So brave.
Michael: I guess it's better than just a blind yes, but still, that's the kind of bravery you see from L.A. City Council.
Joanna: That's what happened on the car-dwelling law. At least one member was conspicuously absent on that vote. It's kind of like some Nancy Pelosi shit. You don't work with fascists, you denounce them and take a position. And I'm kind of in that boat with people who are going to criticize you for taking a position against the Olympics. Not that you're a fascist if you support the Olympics. [laughs] *But!*
Michael: But the Nazis invented the torch relay.
David: Our comrade Steve Duci put it best, "They're not to be argued with, they're to be defeated." I don't know. I liked it, wanna get it on record. [laughs]
Daryl: So I've seen two conflicting polls on whether or not Angelinos support the Olympics or not.
Michael: Is one of them ours?
Daryl: Yes.
Michael: And the other one is the "dictator numbers" of 88% approval. That was the initial poll that was done by the bidding committee. And we have statisticians and marketing people in our group who say that those are "dictator numbers." You don't get those kinds of numbers when you poll people on anything. [laughs] So we raised a bunch of money and did our own survey and it was done through a bunch of random respondents in L.A. and the state of California. People who are paid survey takers, and we found very different results. We found that the more people learn about the games, the less likely they are to support them.
Daryl: And what were your numbers?
Michael: We found that 47% of respondents across California and 45% in L.A. County oppose bringing the games to L.A., with only 26% in support. Far different than the "dictator numbers." Only 9% on respondents strongly supported bringing the games to Los Angeles. And about a third of the number of people was strongly opposed or neutral.
David: And in the meetings leading up to that poll, NOlympics did a really good job of not tilting it too far or slamming the stats in one way. It ended up being fairly objective, because I remember being in that room and thinking, "Well, if you tell someone something is bad, and then ask them, 'Is this bad?' I don't know how honest this is going to be."
Michael: In an initial draft of the survey we had a section that was "How do you feel about these politicians?" And it went 1) Eric Garcetti, 2) Donald Trump. [laughs]
David: Yeah.
Michael: David and I couldn't stop laughing. We were like, "Maybe we should take this out?" That was a little too leading.
Joanna: All these things—the housing issues, police brutality, fair jobs, transit—the more the people understand the legitimacy being interconnected, and the critique resting on those powerful politicians who continue to renege on their responsibilities. Of course the support will go down.
Michael: Another thing I thought of from Tokyo is so much of this is unlearning what you've always assumed about the Olympics. When I was a kid I had a 1996 Atlanta Izzy mascot tie.
David: What? Get out of here! [laughs]
Michael: In Tokyo we learned that the public schools are required to teach thirty hours of Olympics booster material to kids.
Daryl: Is there a history of popular movements stopping the Olympics?
Michael: Yes, Denver in '76. Boston for 2024. If you look at the initial bids of cities who are interested, they exponentially drop off. And now it's like "L.A. won the games!" We were the only people who wanted it.
David: There were no other bids.
Michael: Initially we wanted 2024 and then Paris got it, and they bumped us to 2028.

Daryl: And when I was reading about what had happened, it seemed like they did a double announcement of 2024 and 2028 so there couldn't be an easy withdrawal. Announcing two Summer Olympics at once was unprecedented.

Joanna: Apparently four cities pulled out of the 2026 Winter Games, which is now being split between two cities. And apparently the IOC has just passed a different bidding process, because so many cities have been having these last minute referendums to stop the games. Last month they announced they're overhauling the bidding process because it's becoming such an issue to scramble to find a city. They're probably worried about Paris. And I know another U.S. city just voted to be able to vote on the Olympics. They decided that they needed a referendum before any public money would be spent. That's good.

Steve: Do you have any hope that L.A. will get to that point of having a referendum?

Michael: I think it's still completely possible. This is a moment where people are realizing it for what it is. Within the past year *Adam Ruins Everything* did a segment on it.

David: Your encounter with John Dwyer from the Oh Sees was really uplifting.

Michael: Yeah, I had been talking to John Dwyer from the Oh Sees and Castleface Records about doing some stuff, and then when this Tokyo trip came up and they had a new record coming out, I hit him up and asked if they'd be interested in donating some test presses. Just 'cause I know they've done that for organizations before. He was super receptive to it. They ended up raising $2,000 for us, which came in the day before we left. It's one of those things where if you can explain it to somebody, it's pretty hard for them to be like, *"Well, I like it!"* [laughs]

Michael: Most people who like the Olympics, they like to watch it on TV.

David: It's a $1,800 price tag to get in the stadium.

Michael: And supposedly you won't need a ticket, it'll just be facial recognition.

Joanna: Great!

Michael: That's what Casey Wasserman, chair of the bid committee, is saying. He also recently made his Twitter account private after being potentially implicated in some Jeffrey Epstein stuff.

Daryl: Fucking gross.

Michael: Yeah, so stay tuned for that. Casey Wasserman, chair of the L.A. 2028 organizing committee, he is a real estate rich kid who grew up with Garcetti.

David: Back to what Steve was asking. When it comes to the referendum, the spirit of this group is that there has to be one. What ever it is, we're going to push, and we're going to find the crack.

Daryl: So for people who have read this far, and are thinking, "You know what, I'm not for the Olympics anymore!" What can they do to help this not happen?

Michael: If they live in L.A. they can organize with us. We meet every other Sunday, and canvas every other Saturday.

Daryl: Is there a specific low-key action people in L.A. can take?

Michael: Just boost our stuff on social media. We're not getting honest coverage from our media. There's one newspaper, the *L.A. Times*, and they're complicit.

Joanna: There's a lot of good writing on our website. Also go to city hall meetings. They're really weird and trippy and you feel like you're in a Kafka novel. [laughs] It's like some crazy place were it feels like no one is in touch with any material situation on the ground.

Michael: Another low-key action, I think it's important to mention, NOlympics LA came out of the Housing and Homelessness Committee of DSA-LA, but is also a coalition of groups within the city—almost, if not more, than thirty groups. Black Lives Matter L.A., L.A. Tenants Union, Union Divisinos, all these different kind of orgs that work on parts of our platform so we support all of that work.

David: Arm yourself with knowledge. The more you learn about this stuff, the less you're compelled to not do anything about it.

Daryl: Alright, so hypothetically, there's no referendum and the Olympics happen in 2028. What does the city of Los Angeles have the moral responsibility to do?

David: First and foremost, housing.

Daryl: If you could say one thing to Mayor Garcetti and the L.A. City Council, what would it be?

Joanna: Compensate Kryshelle. Garcetti went over to meet with an unhoused woman named Kryshelle and dropped all his platitudes about how he wants to "inspire people to get off the streets" and a wonderful journalist for KPCC named Matt Tinoco followed the mayor and his crew, and Matt came back twenty minutes after the mayor had left and he saw sanitation show up and throw out all of Kryshelle's stuff. She's already lost over and over and over again, like so many homeless folks in this city.

It's this destabilizing cycle. I don't know if it was the mayor's staff that called in the sweep or not, but either way they wanted to deny it had even happened. Every week there are hundreds of people who lose their crucial belongings, and that's why there's currently a lawsuit against the city of Los Angeles. Section 5611, Article 6 Chapter 5 of The Los Angeles Municipal Code, which basically allows them to immediately seize and destroy people's property. Obviously targeting people who are unhoused. Compensate Kryshelle, Mayor Garcetti.

David: Because they don't listen I would tell them, "We are going to win, your legacy won't be that this is a success. And the sooner you cancel the better."

Michael: Yeah, we'll tell city council whatever anyway. [laughs] They're either on their phones or walking around during the meetings. And some of us have said some truly amazing stuff. But in terms of Garcetti, man, it would be amazing to look him in the eyes and say, "We auditioned a bunch of strangers to play you because you go out of town so often and none of them knew who you were." You can watch the mayor auditions on nolympicsla.com, featuring a bunch of Craigslist actors. [laughs]

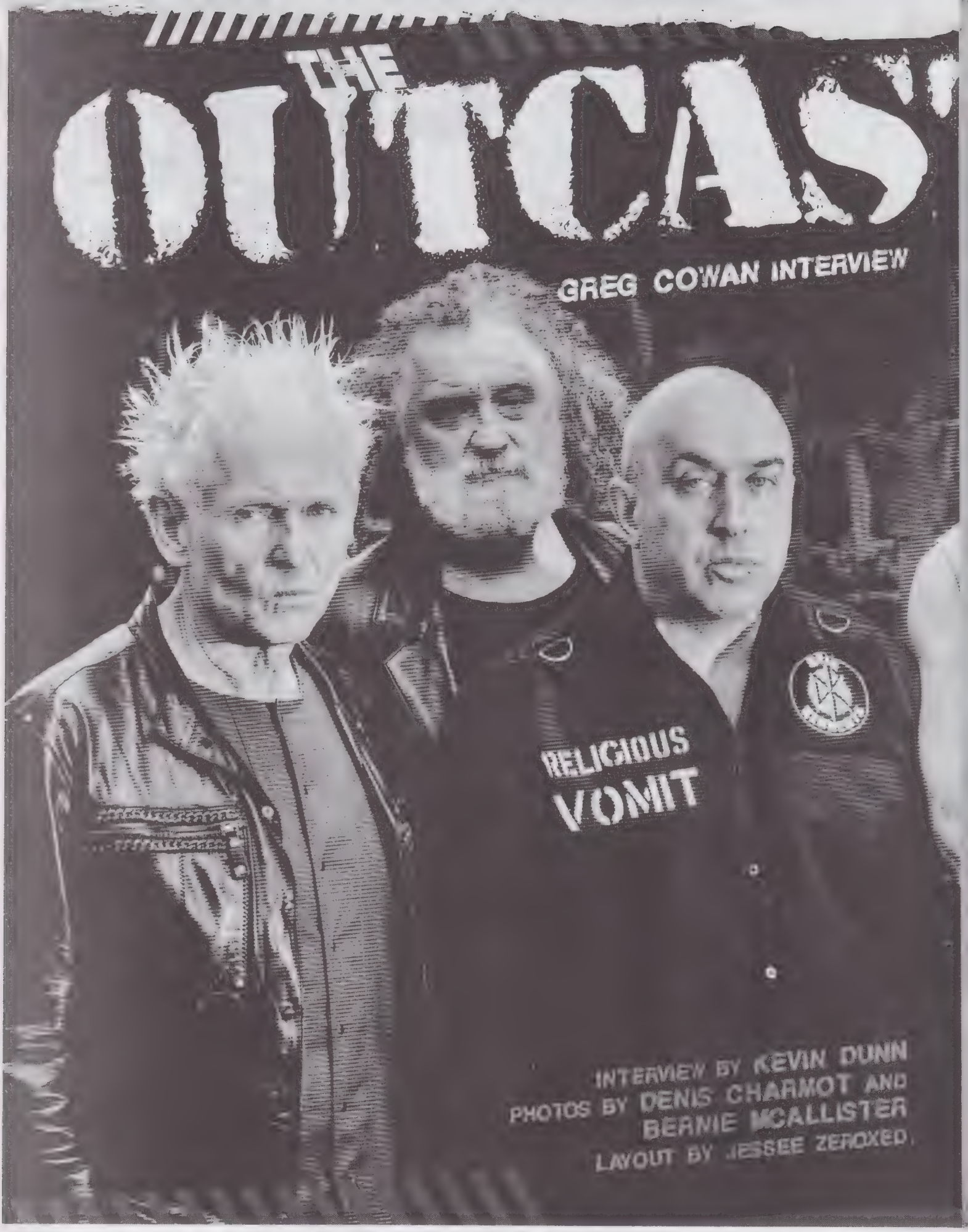
David: That's pretty good.

Joanna: Yessss!

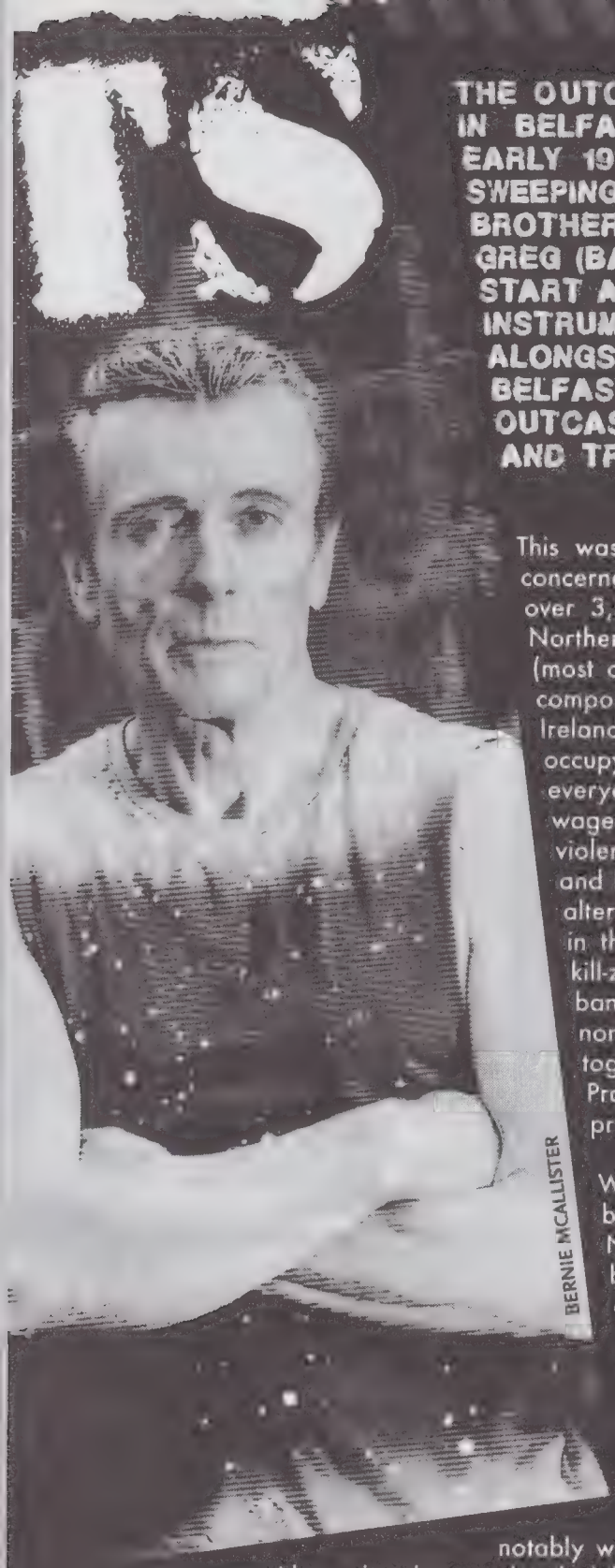
Thanks for reading this.
Please continue this conversation
with the people in your lives.
Create the discourse,
demand a referendum.

THE OUTCASTS

GREG COWAN INTERVIEW



INTERVIEW BY KEVIN DUNN
PHOTOS BY DENIS CHARMOT AND
BERNIE MCALLISTER
LAYOUT BY JESSEE ZEROXED



BERNIE MCALLISTER

THE OUTCASTS WERE ONE OF THE FIRST PUNK BANDS IN BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND. THEY FORMED IN EARLY 1977, JUST AS THE FIRST WAVE OF PUNK WAS SWEEPING ACROSS THE U.K. THE THREE COWAN BROTHERS—MARTIN (GUITAR), COLIN (DRUMS) AND GREG (BASS AND VOCALS)—DECIDED THEY WANTED TO START A BAND BEFORE THEY COULD EVEN PLAY THEIR INSTRUMENTS. BEFORE THEY EVEN HAD INSTRUMENTS. ALONGSIDE STIFF LITTLE FINGERS AND RUDI IN BELFAST AND THE UNDERTONES IN DERRY, THE OUTCASTS HELPED CREATE ONE OF THE MOST VITAL AND TRANSFORMATIVE PUNK SCENES IN THE WORLD.

This was at the height of The Troubles, the era of political violence concerned with the status of Northern Ireland that would eventually claim over 3,500 lives. Unionists (most of which were Protestants) wanted Northern Ireland to remain part of the United Kingdom, while Republicans (most of which were Catholics) wanted the six counties of Ulster that composed Northern Ireland to become unified with the Republic of Ireland. By 1977, Belfast was an active war zone: the British Army was occupying the streets, the city center was a no-go zone after dark, everyone stuck to their segregated neighborhoods, and paramilitaries waged a violent campaign of bombings, assassinations and random violence. While being a punk might get you strange looks in London and NYC, it could get you killed in Northern Ireland. But punk would alter the political and social reality of Belfast. Literally taking their lives in their hands, they would traverse security barricades and sniper kill-zones to get to venues such as the Harp and the Pound to see bands like The Outcasts, SLF and Rudi play. Punk shows became non-sectarian spaces where Catholic and Protestant youth came together for the first time. They stopped being Catholics and Protestants and became fellow punks. They imagined, and put into practice, an Alternative Ulster.

While many of their fellow bands chased stardom in the U.K. and beyond, The Outcasts stayed in Belfast and built a following across Northern Ireland, becoming the country's biggest punk band. After brother Colin's untimely death in 1982, the band continued on until calling it quits in 1985. During their eight-year run, they helped strengthen a punk scene and youth culture that established the foundation for the peace process that eventually resulted in the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

The story of Northern Ireland's transformative punk scene was documented at the time in John T. Davis' classic film Shellshock Rock, and it has gotten increased attention in recent years, most notably with the release of the 2013 feature film Good Vibrations (along with a related stage show). A historic marker has been placed outside the Harp Bar, and Greg Cowan's studded leather OUTCASTS jacket is prominently displayed as part of a current exhibit on The Troubles in the Ulster Museum. As Belfast punks were finally getting their due, a reluctant Greg Cowan came out of retirement and, with his brother Martin, alongside Belfast punk veterans Petesy Burns (Stalag 17) and HP Isotope, reformed The Outcasts. On the verge of major European and Japanese tours, and the release of their anthology Tell Me the Whole Story, I sat down with Greg to talk about the legacy of The Outcasts, Belfast punk, and second acts.

Kevin: There's a legend that The Outcasts got its name because you were banned from a whole bunch of venues.

Greg: Well, it's not a legend. It's just a story that's been told a lot. There was three of us brothers: my brother Martin, my brother Colin, and me. We were all into Bowie, Alice Cooper, things like that there. When Martin first bought "Anarchy in the UK," I can remember we all looked at each other and went, "You know, that's just the greatest thing I've ever heard."

Martin had played the guitar a little bit. Me and Getty (Colin Getgood), the original guitarist of the band, played in people's living rooms with our own friends doing Bowie covers and things. We couldn't really play, but at that stage, we all looked at each other and went, "We could do something like that there." That was the genesis of the band.

It must have been six months later before we finally got proper instruments and started rehearsing. We were already calling ourselves "The Outcasts" because we had turned punk as much as we could have done.

We're running about together and in one week had been turned away from five or six or seven different venues each night because of the way we were looking. My brother, Colin, then went, "We're The Outcasts. That's what we are." We were called The Outcasts before the band started really.

Kevin: You were being turned away just because of the way you looked?

Greg: The way you looked. Belfast in 1976/1977 was—because of security—was very limited. Belfast, the city center, was a complete ghost town. There was no city center. That closed at six o'clock at night. You'd have to go to hotels or bars on the outskirts, most of which they would have a security hut away from the main bar itself you would have to go through to get in. Security man would look at you and turn you away. This was the days of suits and ties that people wore to go out.

Kevin: What was the dynamic like between the brothers? Are you the youngest?

Greg: I was the youngest out of those three. Martin's the oldest, Colin, then me. Then Getty came with me. Getty was my friend from primary school. Martin could play guitar a bit, whereas Colin picked the drums, which he never really mastered in any way. [laughter] I had played a little bit of bass, and Getty had played a little bit of guitar. That's how the band started.

Kevin: You started playing out in early '77. Were you playing at the Harp Bar yet?

Greg: No, the Harp wasn't going then. We were looking for venues. Belfast didn't really have any music scene. The Troubles had decimated that. Belfast had a music scene out of bands that just played cover versions. They were called "show bands." The word "punk"—although wasn't that well known—it was well known enough that nobody wanted to put anything on. You would hire a venue, like a hotel, and say it was a private party. Only behind-the-doors people would know. The first couple of gigs were like that there. the Harp didn't start for maybe a year, maybe 1978? I think.

Kevin: In Belfast punk lore, there's the legend of the Bedford Street riots following the canceling of The Clash gig.

Greg: We were The Outcasts by then. This was the first Clash date that went down, and the legendary riots.

Kevin: Were you there for that?

Greg: Well, everybody was. I mean—how big a riot there was and how significant it was—a lot of people...

Kevin: Everyone claims to be there. [laughter]

Greg: Yeah. Everybody claimed to be there. Certainly, we all had our tickets. I can't remember that much of a riot. But I do remember it was one of those nights that, because everybody went to the bars afterwards, you met people. We honestly believe when we formed as The Outcasts, we were the only punk band in Belfast. We didn't know about Stiff Little Fingers, and we didn't know about The Undertones in Derry. Honestly, it wasn't till we played our very first gig—in a venue that the Stiff Little Fingers had played in the week before. We didn't know anything about equipment. When we were trying to put up a PA and went one out between two guitars, Jake (Burns) and Ali (McMordie of SLF) arrived and helped us. It was only then that we thought, "God, there's another punk band?" Then we found out about Rudi as well, round about that period.

DENIS CHARMOT

BERNIE MCALLISTER

PUNK DID POSSIBLY MORE IN BELFAST THAN IT DID ANYWHERE. NOT THROUGH GREAT MINDS GOING ON, OR BY OSMOSIS, OR JUST BY FUCKING CHANCE. BUT IT DID. IT FUCKING DID.

Kevin: With those Belfast bands, they're all very unique, right.

Greg: In Northern Ireland music, we tend towards a more melodic sound. We wanted to be the Sex Pistols and hardcore. When we played the songs Martin wrote, it always came out more like pop songs. [laughter] Yet at the time, we didn't realize that. It was only when you started making records and you played it back, you'd go "What the fuck is that? That's not what I thought we were going to sound like." [laughter] Plus, Stiff Little Fingers had been a band for a couple years. They could play.

Kevin: Yeah, they were originally called Highway Star (a band formed in school, named after a Deep Purple Song).

Greg: Right. Compared to us, they were fucking brilliant musicians. Rudi, as well,

had played glam stuff. We were miles behind them on musical abilities. The Undertones as well were a different league. Anytime we first seen any of those bands, we were shocked about how good they were. Well, I always thought Martin's songwriting was more advanced than what we could actually play. But all the Belfast bands, especially in that period, all came out with a fairly melodic version of punk rock. I don't know where that comes from, but it's very noticeable.

Kevin: What was the relationship between The Outcasts, Terri Hooley, and Good Vibrations (Hooley's legendary Belfast record store and record label)?

Greg: We were so naïve. We went and made a demo, and just sent it round to every single record company. Nobody answered, except a little independent company, It Records, contacted us and made our first single.

Kevin: They were in Portadown, right?

Greg: They were a record shop in Portadown. He had released Victim (another Belfast punk band) as well by that stage. That's the way our relationship with Terri started.

Kevin: In the movie *Good Vibrations* (2013 film based on Hooley's life), have you seen that?

Greg: [laughs] Yeah, only about once or twice.

Kevin: [laughs] There's the great scene where... It's either you or Getty who approach him.

Greg: It's me in the movie.

Kevin: Terri turned you down. "No way, I'm not that drunk."

Greg: It's true. Terri went to see us and Rudi, and chose Rudi. We didn't know this. We didn't meet Terri. The instance of coming down and saying, "What about us?" didn't happen. Mentally it happened. He chose them and hated us. He did. He thought we were terrible.

Kevin: I recently spent an afternoon with Terri and he said the first time he saw The Outcasts, he thought you were just dreadful. [laughter] Then, a few months later, he's managing you, putting out a single...

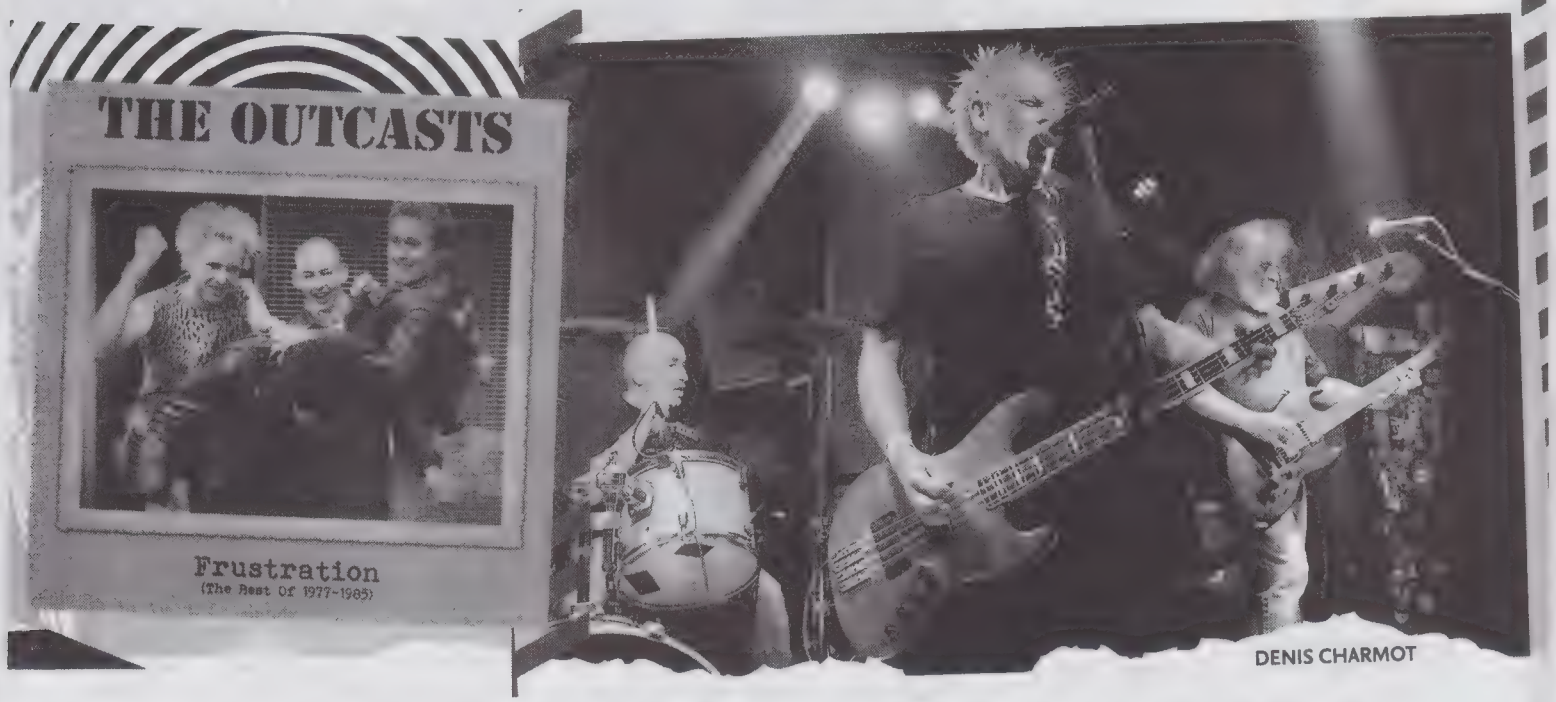
Greg: When we started with Good Vibes; Terri had this thing—a big thing, too—we weren't that keen to leave Northern Ireland. We wanted to spread punk. You think about what you're like at seventeen years of age. You're quite evangelistical about things. Terri loved that because most of the other bands wanted to do a record on Good Vibes, get a deal, and head off. Rudi, especially, wanted to get out, and fair play to them, but we didn't. That really appealed to Terri.

Terri had this crazy notion that he wanted to spread punk to the provinces, and he did. That's why he really liked us for that: we didn't want to use him as a stepping stone. We just bonded. He loved the sort of anarchy, to a certain extent. Compared to the rest of the bands, we were a lot more boisterous. Not the music. The music wasn't harder, but the band themselves, not me, were quite hard. Martin and Colin were quite prepared to start a fight anywhere, and the guys who were attracted to the band then—we're not talking about people running about with guns and knives or anything—but to be a punk in Belfast then, you had to look out for yourself. We attracted that sort of very personal following.

Kevin: The story that comes out of the movie—but it's also the story that gets told in general—is that the Harp Bar becomes this non-sectarian space where punks are coming to the city center. They're reclaiming the city center, and you've got people from all over the city coming in...

Greg: Yeah, it's true, but not by any great design. I'll be honest. We had noticed there was a cover punk band—I forget what they were called—were playing the Harp. At that stage, we were always looking for anywhere to play. So me and Gary went down and saw the manager of the Harp and said that we're a punk band. The Harp club was always a strip club during the day, but like most bars in town they closed up at six or seven o'clock at night.

So he was happy enough to keep the place going and put it on. The first time we



DENIS CHARMOT

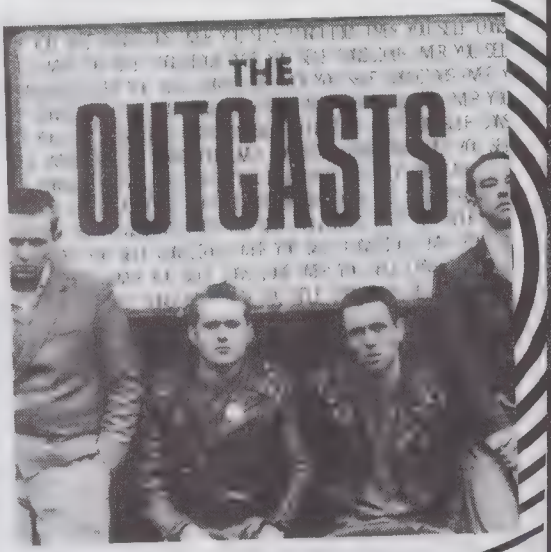
THERE'S NOTHING BETTER FOR BONDING PEOPLE TOGETHER THAN TO HAVE A COMMON ENEMY.

They paid for and released our first record. Then, I honestly didn't know about Good Vibes until "Big Time" (Rudi's first single) came out. That was first I knew about Terri Hooley. We were so impressed at "Big Time." We had recorded in the same studio. [laughs] I swear to god, it had taken us sixty takes or something to try and get something down.

When we heard "Big Time," "Fuck, that's brilliant." Couldn't believe it. With It Records, it was a strictly one-off deal. They had promised things, but the record just sounded awful, so I went to Terri and went, "Look, can we not be on Good Vibrations?"

played there, there might have been ten, fifteen people. But we played there a couple of times. Then other bands started playing, and then Terri approached them about making it a proper thing, what he called the Punk Workshop. There was nowhere else, but then it became solely a punk venue. This was by accident. The owners were happy enough just to let that go. For a couple of years, it was the center of Northern Ireland even, certainly the punk center.

As far as it being integrated—that happened, once again, by accident. Remember, in Northern Ireland, because there was no city center, people stayed within their own area. You socialized within your own area at nighttime. There was no point going into town. You didn't cross the city. Catholic stayed in Catholic areas, Protestant stayed in Protestant areas. What the Harp did was totally by accident. All of a sudden you were interested in music, so you went to the Harp. It wasn't preplanned. That was the point, your interest was music. If you



were a punk you couldn't socialize within your own area, because somebody could kill you. More importantly...

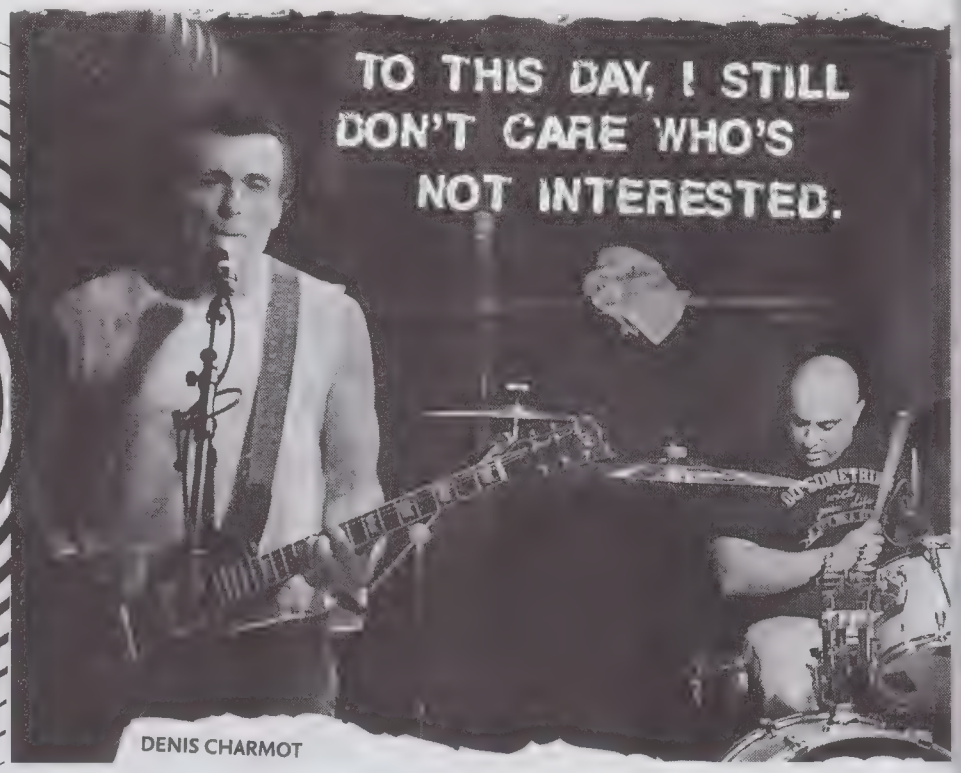
Kevin: What do you mean that you could get killed in your own area just because you're a punk?

Greg: Because of the way you looked. It was a violent city for street gangs. You would just get picked upon because of the way you looked. What also happened with the Harp—and this was the beauty of it which people tend to forget—that the Harp closed at eleven o'clock at night. Last bus was ten past 11:00. Taxis were unheard of in Belfast then.

So people started going to other people's houses. You would constantly be going to a house party after the Harp, or going to somebody's house. If somebody drove, you'd put thirty people in their car, so you suddenly found yourself going to areas you wouldn't normally have ever been in. That's how it broke down barriers. You met a girl from a different village and so many of us from that generation married across the religion divide. None of it was planned, that's why it worked. You suddenly found yourself—just to use a classic example—if you're from the Shankill Road you were suddenly up at Falls Road—you looked and realized there's nothing different than where you lived yourself.

Kevin: One of the interesting things about the Harp was that it was a challenge to get there and to get back. Having to cross...

Greg: Having to cross, number one, the city center itself. When the security gates went up, you had to climb the gates and get across, if you were coming from that side of town. I was slightly different. My parents were fairly middle class. I drove from a very early age. My dad had a painting business. I had a van, so it would be the van we'd fill up and there'd be thirty people. Police also had a fairly tolerant view to driving offences then.



DENIS CHARMOT

I learned this afterwards, but it was very important for the powers that be to keep Belfast as an infrastructure going. You could honestly have a van and the police would open the back doors, and there'd be twenty, thirty people in there in the back. They'd just close the doors up and say, "Go on." You could drive with a couple of drinks in you at that period. I learned years and years later that there was a policy of turning a blind eye to quite a few things just to keep socializing.

Like in the (*Good Vibrations*) film, the police and army would open the back doors and they would check people's ID and suddenly, "Hold on, you're from there and you're from there?!" That was a big thing and they would just… [makes a stunned, confused face]. [laughter] "Just go on." It's all true. It gets glamorized through the past but it's true. When you look back on it, it gave people a chance to meet people from another side of town that they would never have done.

Kevin: There is the myth about the Harp and the punk scene being a space of rejecting that sectarian violence, but at the same time...

Greg: Yeah. But remember, you don't take a guy who's sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, years of age, who's been brought up in a very bigoted community and think he's going to walk in and go, "Let's hug a Catholic." It wasn't a hippy movement, you know what I mean? People still brought some of their own background with them. What mainly would happen, too, is that groups of guys would go to the Harp to start a fight, coming back from football on a Saturday afternoon. "Let's go to the Harp and fight the punks." There's nothing better for bonding people together than to have a common enemy.

Kevin: The Outcasts—and especially people who were following you—were known for violence.

Greg: Cartoon violence.

Kevin: What do you mean by cartoon violence?

Greg: Like wee punches… there was an awful lot of trouble, I'll be honest—more so, Martin, Colin, and the hardcore of our fans. We traveled as a bunch of maybe twenty, thirty people, with a hardcore of maybe ten who went to every gig. They were roughs. It would be more reactionary. People would think that, "Let's go and bully the punks," or something. Then suddenly realize they're in a fucking bell.

Unfortunately, in some of the early days this would spill over with other bands. Look, there is a myth of all the bands being on the label. Bands are incredibly jealous creatures, especially us. We watched every other band become more successful than us. It

was violent at times. You're doing what you can to spoil things. Years later, it's the opposite now. You're so friendly and you love the guys who were your rivals then, but it wasn't: "Let's all help each other and join in here." If Terri paid one band more attention than the other, you fucking hated them for it. That's the god damned truth, from my point of view anyway. I was incredibly jealous of Stiff Little Fingers, and the Undertones. Now I really like the guys, but I'm still incredibly jealous of them; let's be honest. [laughter]

Kevin: I saw a great interview with you and Jake Burns from the early 1980s. You were being a little prickly… [laughter]

Greg: Yeah, yeah. Who got the last laugh there? We played with Stiffs a couple of times over the last few years. The Stiffs are a bigger band now than they've ever been. As far as a live act, they're playing bigger venues. They sell out everything. But now, we actually like each other. They're very generous to us.

Kevin: Let's talk about Rudi. You mentioned about Rudi moving to London. The Stiff Little Fingers left, Ruefrex left Belfast, but Outcasts...

Greg: Ruefrex, pffft! [laughing]. You never really counted them. Once again, I'm very fond of them now, but as a band, I don't know what the fuck they were at. But we watched the Stiffs become a band. Stiffs were only here for a while but they left before anybody. They got their deal and away they went. Fair play, that's what they wanted to do.

Rudi would have been our rivalry for the period until Rudi went to London. Even when they came back, there was always... we were rivals through the years. Now major friendships have developed. We never did have the success the Stiffs were having away, but there was a wee period we'd have been Belfast's brightest.

Kevin: Why didn't you leave? Was the opportunity there to leave?

Greg: Never. It wasn't like there was major labels ringing and offering us deals. [laughs] It didn't happen. As far as touring, we were limited. It was all about the next week and the next week. We didn't have any master plan. We certainly didn't expect to be sitting now with you talking about it. [laughs] I never believed for one minute we were ever going to be a real band. I was expecting somebody would put their arm around you, "Fuck off now. Come on." [laughter] I sometimes wonder, in the studio and stuff, why somebody didn't. Most of the other bands had a plan. That was their plan: get a record, get a deal, get away and get to England. Try and get a career there. We were too comfortable here.

Kevin: What does the scene look like as it starts to move into the '80s? You've got bands leaving. You're staying, but the Harp closes down. The Anarchy Centre opens up (The A-Centre and then Giros became the focus for the Belfast punk in the mid-1980s, the latter run by the Warzone Collective).

Greg: We were never really part of that. At that stage, we'd signed into a couple of French labels. We did start going to places like France, Switzerland, and for a more limited period, England. We started to get on a few of the TV shows and stuff like that there. That was probably our most professional period—in the early '80s up to about '82, '83, in there.

Kevin: You're putting stuff out on New Rose, right?

Greg: That was the French label.

Kevin: How did that happen? I heard you signed because they bought you dinner. [laughter]

Greg: It's true. First of all, a French guy, called fucking Marc Boullier, came to Belfast. He had this theory that the French people loved English music, but didn't like the English. He wanted an Irish band, thinking there might be a Celtic connection. [laughter] This is true. This was his idea. He came to Belfast, watched a couple of bands, and chose us. He took us to Paris to do five nights in a club. The first label wasn't New Rose. I can't remember the first label. Big Beat Records? They took us for dinner.

There is a true story. First, nobody had ever, ever given us a drink. Took us for the dinner and we signed any bit of paper they put in front of us for that night. [laughter] Unbeknown to us, unfortunately, Polydor in France wanted to sign us. We didn't find out until they did offer us a deal, only to find out we'd signed away our French rights for the next five years, and Terri Hooley had countersigned for us as well! [laughter] It was a horrible year of trying to get out of this deal that we had signed. Then New Rose Records moved in, took us on, and they released the next couple records for us. I think we did licensing deals then with English companies.

WE WANTED TO SPREAD PUNK. YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE LIKE AT SEVENTEEN YEARS OF AGE. YOU'RE QUITE EVANGELISTICAL ABOUT THINGS.

Kevin: You were also releasing stuff on your own label GBH, which then became Outcasts Only label.

Greg: Yeah, well, Terri had sacked us.

Kevin: Why did he dump you?

Greg: Well, Terri would have to tell you. [laughs] There was a lot of trouble associated with the band. Not even gigs and stuff, but they weren't very nice people. [laughs] There would be parties wrecked. And people would go down to Terri's shop and hassle Terri about this. A lot of Terri's friends were very old hippies. Terri would host gigs in the Ulster Hall, where he'd have all of his friends. Some of them might have freaked out a little. There would be things that happen there, and Terri just couldn't handle it. Terri is a big, peaceable guy.

I look back at this; I know I'm laughing now but it wasn't very funny for him. I wish I'd have kept the letter that he wrote us. "I can't do this any fucking more." [laughter]

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"You're no longer on the label." Not that there was any formal signing or anything, anyway. But he did sack us.

Kevin: Right, just washed his hands out of you.

Greg: We had just recorded "Magnum Force" and we decide to put it out ourselves. We got a manager with this stager guy called Ross Graham. Ross looked after all that. We brought out it and the next one on GBH Records. That was our first label.

Kevin: I want to ask you about something and I know this might be a little complicated because when people talk about the Belfast scene at that time, there is a conversation about how what's happening there was bringing people together. At the same time, you've got Offensive Weapon and Johnny Adair (Offensive Weapon was a right-wing skinhead band led by Johnny Adair, who would become known as "Mad Dog" Adair, a notoriously violent paramilitary member of the Ulster Defense Association). Some people overplay it. Some people want to ignore it.

Greg: It's absolutely such a small thing. We had Colin—that was our original drummer, my brother. Colin never managed to learn the drums properly; couldn't do a drum roll, couldn't do anything. Then one day, he arrived with Raymond (Falls) who was fifteen years of age, his girlfriend's brother. We then had two drummers because Colin needed it. Raymond was a wee skinhead from up in Glencairn, in the heart of Shankill area. Raymond's friends—where they all grew up in school together—would have been Johnny Adair in Offensive Weapon. They were a skinhead band. I had to wee porta-studio, a four-track we would use for doing demos and stuff. I did quite a few bands then, let them come up and record a few things. I did Petesy (Burns)'s band, whatever they were.

Kevin: Stalag 17.

Greg: Stalag 17. You know better than me. [laughter] Yeah, so I did one with them and then I did Offensive Weapon. I wish I'd fucking kept the tape. But then, Johnny was a kid of fourteen or something. They didn't have any fans or anything. I think they did support us at the Pound. They must have done two gigs or three gigs, and they had this demo tape where I had to play bass on because he couldn't actually play bass. Johnny Adair became legendary ten years later.

Kevin: And he still has an Outcast tattoo, right?

Greg: I was there. When they were kids, Raymond was getting his and I was getting a cover up or something. He was there and for some reason he just got an Outcast tattoo. It's only years later that you're looking back and going, "That's who he was." He was a fourteen- or fifteen-year-old little boy. His legend came up later.

Kevin: You have Raymond; he's got the whole skinhead look. Does that change the dynamic of your crowds?

Greg: Well, not at all. We'd flirted with a skinhead period ourselves. When I first came out of the hospital—I'd had a car accident in 1979—my head was shaved. Then Getty shaved his head to match mine, and then Colin always had short hair. There was a wee period of nothing in any way politically, but that look—that was a punky skinhead time. That was fine. The skins and punks was who you played to.

Unfortunately in England it then became a major... I mean there was no fucking National Front or anything here, you know. Okay, Offensive Weapon might have been. As it turned out, Johnny became a loyalist paramilitary leader. That's purely from where he was brought up. It was a non-political scene. As much as Stalag 17 would have been pro-communist, or something like that, it didn't really mean anything to anybody.

When Martin first started writing songs—it wasn't our reaction to Stiff Little Fingers or anything, who wanted to sing about Northern Ireland. We weren't political anyway. No, we really weren't. We didn't have political thoughts or ideas, apart from fucking hating Northern Ireland.

We wanted to live there, but we're also happy to play anywhere. The proudest thing that we ever did, we played fucking anywhere. We played hell clubs in the middle of the worst Catholic areas in Belfast or Derry. We'd play anywhere, because we really believed in what we were doing.

BERNIE MCALLISTER

IT WAS A VERY MIXED, MIXED, MIXED CROWD. POLITICS JUST WASN'T DISCUSSED. APART FROM THAT, WE HATED EVERYBODY.

We just weren't political people. We were very integrated with our relationships and the people we hung about with. It was a very mixed, mixed, mixed crowd. Politics just wasn't discussed. Apart from that, we hated everybody.

Kevin: In May of '82 is when Colin dies, right? How'd that impact the band?

Greg: By that stage we'd all started to improve musically a bit. Even I learned to play a few notes on the bass. Getty had dramatically improved. Colin never, but Raymond, at least, was drumming very nice. But Colin was always the heart and soul of the band. We had a manager by that stage, Ross, but most decisions came through Colin. The original name came from Colin. A lot of the spirit came from Colin. A lot of organizational stuff. When Colin died, we really didn't think we were going to carry on.

He was more than just my big brother. Martin was five years older. Colin was a couple years older. I worshiped Colin. As a person, he was a lovely, charismatic, likable guy. I thought we were going to split. If we'd had to go and get another drummer, I don't think it would have happened. Because Raymond was already there, we just made the decision to carry on.

Kevin: Musically it starts to change a bit though, right?

Greg: Oh, it does. Don't forget we're not one of these bands who wrote collectively. Martin wrote everything. He would arrive into rehearsals with a completed song. He wouldn't say, "Play this on the bass" or "something like that there," but he would have the chords and the tune and that was

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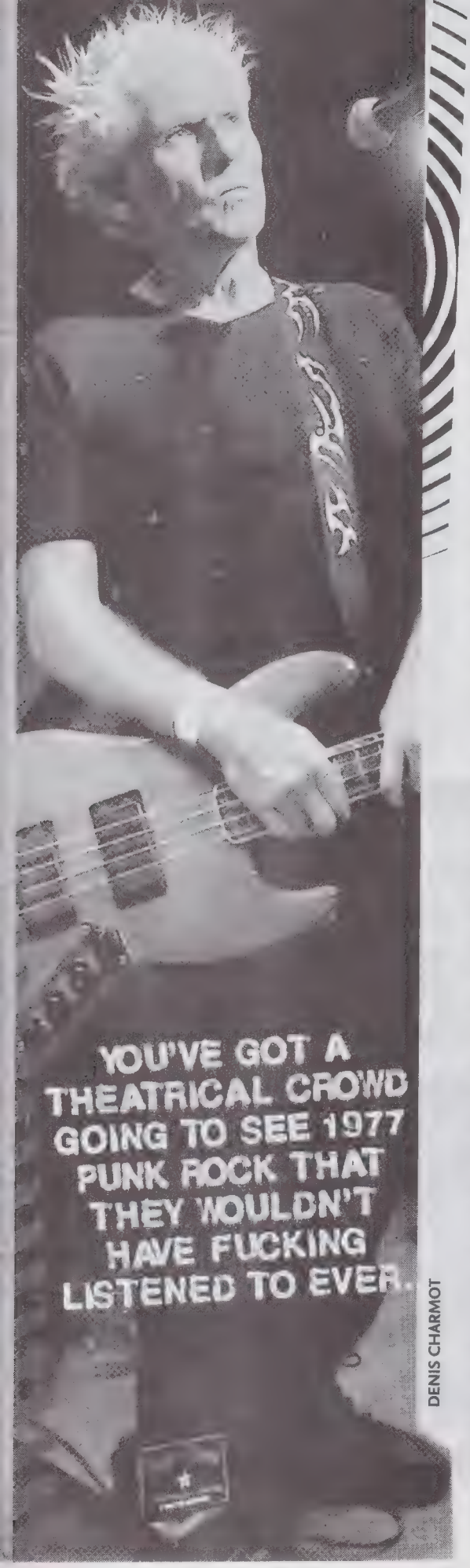

DENIS CHARMOT

it. We daren't vary from that there. We were always happy to go along. Whatever Martin came up with is whatever Martin came up with.

At that stage we were doing touring in England a bit. We toured with the Meateaters. You got into that rockabilly type of thing. Purely, after playing with them, we loved them. We thought they were brilliant. We loved them as guys, so he went away and wrote the rockabilly song.

Kevin: "Seven Deadly Sins."

Greg: "Seven Deadly Sins." He would be greatly influenced that way. Way back as far as the beginning if we were playing with some band that had a slow/speed up/slow song, he went, "We need a slow/speed up/slow song." It wouldn't be that we liked to copy, but it would just put an idea in his head. We were always happy to follow.

Kevin: Let me ask you: as the songwriting is changing, is it diversifying or is it losing focus?

Greg: Hindsight, I felt towards the very end, we should have split up way before we did. Some of the later things... but, I really loved being in the band. We weren't one of those bands that had a big split up and we all walked away hating each other. It just slowly fizzled out.

Kevin: In '85, right?

Greg: Way before then even.

Kevin: What were you doing in the late '80s and the '90s? You were working for your dad's painting business?

Greg: Well, we were very lucky. Martin had been a schoolteacher. Me and Colin were always working the family firm. Thanks god that we did. After the band was over, financially, we were actually probably better off in a way. [laughter] We just stopped playing and carried on. Colin was dead by this stage. Martin's teaching career didn't exactly blossom, so he joined the firm. That was it then musically.

Kevin: Am I right that what brings you back together is the release of Sean O'Neill and Guy Trelford's 2003 book *It Makes You Want to Spit*?

Greg: I was one of those people who swore blind, "I hate punk bands that re-formed." Yet, at the time, I remember going to see U.K. Subs and I kind of reversed my decision. They were never my favorite band. They kind of left me cold. Then I went to see them in Belfast. It wasn't a very well-attended gig. I just went, "Fuck me, that still works." Then Sean, when he was doing the book, they were going to have the opening night. He just went to me and Brian (Young of Rudi), "Fancy forming a band for the night?"

Kevin: That was Shame Academy.

Greg: That was Shame Academy. Then Petesy, at that stage, was running the Warzone (Collective), so there was rehearsal studios. We all decided we'll have a couple rehearsals and see how it goes, and loved it. Loved the rehearsing leading up to it. Didn't realize how much I liked Brian until we started playing together and what a fucking great musician he was.

Kevin: Brian is such a great guy. A sweetheart.

Greg: He is. Petesy was actually drumming then. We did the night in the Empire, and I just remember walking offstage and going, "Fuck, if that's not it. I want to do this." I'd forgotten how much I love being on stage. And then for Shame Academy we were doing a mixture of Rudi, Outcasts, and a couple of songs which may have been big in the Harp Bar. I really enjoyed playing the Rudi song, funny enough. [laughter]

Kevin: They're great songs.

Greg: They are. We kept it going for a bit and then for my fiftieth birthday, which would be in 2010, I said to Martin, "Let's do The Outcasts just for my birthday." Brian's still playing guitar, Petesy played bass rhythm-cum-backing drums, and Martin. So for my fiftieth birthday, we learned an Outcasts set.

We did that and I really love that more than even doing Shame Academy. I loved it being The Outcasts. Then me and Martin made a decision then. "Let's get The Outcasts back together." Brian stayed on for the first three gigs, but then he just went, "That's me." We suddenly realized there were festivals like Rebellion, and they contacted up and said, "Look it, are you back together? Because we'll put you on."

Kevin: Let me say this—and I mean this in a respectful way—[laughter] but like a lot of punk bands, Outcasts wrote their best songs when they couldn't play their instruments.

Greg: So true.

Kevin: As you got better, most of the songs weren't as good, right?

Greg: That's a classic, your first album. Yet, at the time, the better you got and the better the recordings got, the songs weren't as strong.

Kevin: Like "Teenage Rebel" and "Self-Conscious," those were great songs. I wish they were better played and recorded, but that's what you're doing now, right?

Greg: Yeah, exactly. I know you've heard me say this before, but one of the big things is now being able to play the songs. Not that it's dramatically different, but at least play the right notes at the right time and maybe sing it in tune. I'm very proud of my voice in some of the recordings. I like my singing, but live, then I was just a screecher. I could not sing. Not live. Part of the fun now is being able to play the songs properly. Our set, even now, it is still basically the band's 1977-1978 stuff, with a few things thrown in.

Kevin: It's an interesting second act. Because you've got these great songs and now—god bless Colin—but the drumming is probably better now, right? [laughter]

Greg: Well, yes. [laughs] It is that. But as it turns out, drumming doesn't make a song. It does in live performance. Colin's drumming...

Kevin: It did the job.

Greg: [laughs] It did the job. The funny thing is when we were relearning the songs—because there was no such thing as electronic tuners then—"Should we just change it to whatever?" I swear I played these bass notes here, but along with the record, it wouldn't

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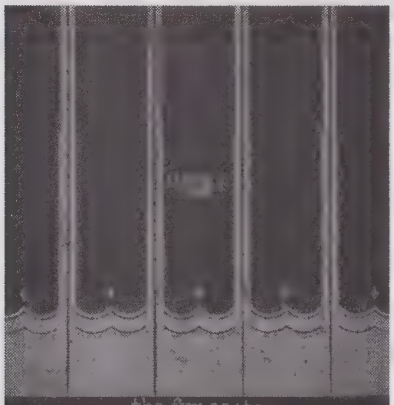

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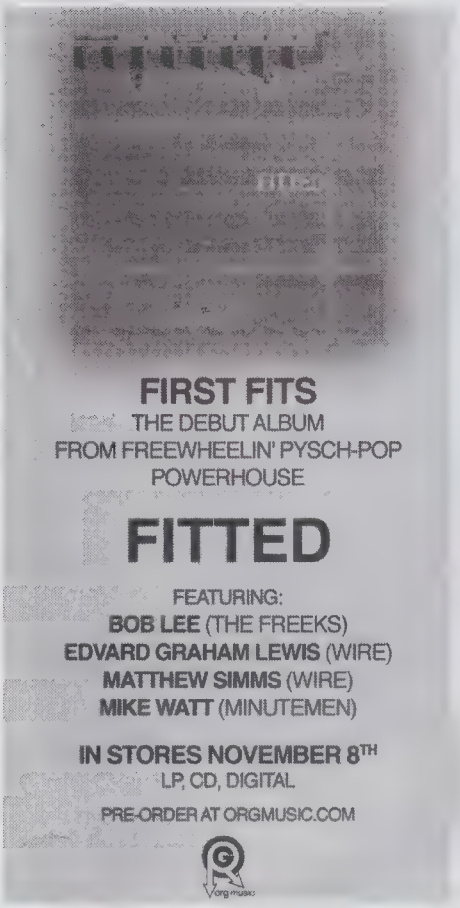

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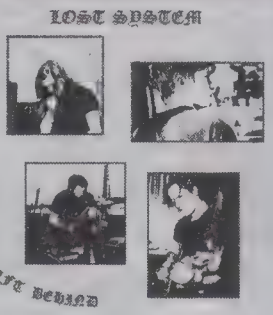

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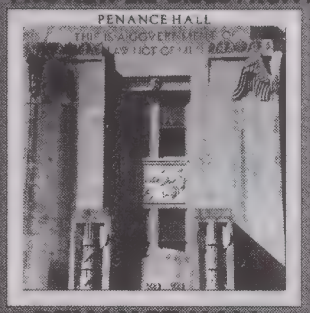

PENANCE HALL **TRAMPOLINE TEAM**

fit. You're quite right that most bands are like that. Your initial songs are where the energy and things come from, too, and it just slowly, slowly deteriorates. You don't realize that there at the time. You're more concerned with, "Good, this sounds like a real record now."

The funny thing is I was so much against doing any new recordings at all. A small American label had offered to pay up for three new tracks and us to cover Rudi's "The Pressure's On." Because of Shame Academy always did "The Pressure's On," and I said to Brian when he left, "We're going to steal 'The Pressure's On' now. There's no Rudi anyway, so we're just going to keep on doing it." [laughter]. Because Brian has his own rockabilly band (The Sabrejets) and they do a version of our "Seven Deadly Sins."

Kevin: Turnabout is fair play [laughter].

Greg: Quid pro quo. I'll take "Pressure." I'll tell you, it gets me mad sometimes. There's sometimes a dodgy gig, then you play "The Pressure's On" and the whole place goes mad. What the fuck is that? [laughter] The point was, I was so, so against recording anything new. But, you know my wife got the breast cancer?

Kevin: Yeah, I know.

Greg: But my wife was sick and I stepped back for a bit and the boys went and recorded these songs. I was shocked at how good it sounded. I was dreading to hear it. I honestly was. Bands of our age shouldn't even be doing new recordings. Who the fuck's interested? But to this day, I still don't care who's not interested. I was genuinely shocked when I heard them. I kept saying, "Martin, a sixty-three-year-old man can't reproduce being seventeen again." But they got something. They got something of the old…

I want nothing to do with any of this. I just went, "Lads, keep me out," and they were brilliant. They kept me out of everything. It was funny, listening to the tracks. It was, "How dare they, without me." [laughter] I was pleasantly surprised. I'm not saying it's going to set the world on fire, but I'm not embarrassed by it, which I thought I would have been. In fact, more than that.

Kevin: Secret Mission Records, the Japanese label, just released The Outcasts' anthology *Tell Me the Whole Story*. I slept on it, and it immediately sold out. [laughter]

Greg: It sold out, yeah. But what was more shocking was that they were insisting that it must be all the original artwork, original recording. And Terri had everything. Honestly, I cannot believe to this day that Terri kept everything.

Kevin: Wow. Holy crap. [laughter]

Greg: So now we're off for our first Japanese tour. It may well be phone boxes and pizza parlors. I just think it's one of the funniest things ever, to do a Japanese tour at our age.

Kevin: Yeah, that's brilliant. One of the last things I want to ask you about is how there's this second act for The Outcasts. At the same time, especially in Belfast, there's this kind of punk nostalgia. You've got the *Good Vibrations* movie and the follow-up stage show.

Greg: The most shocking thing of the last few years was how big the stage show was. It sold out every night. The Lyric Theatre's part of Belfast's folklore, because it went through the Troubles too, and so many famous actors came from there. To find out that it was the biggest show they've ever had—I mean it just caught that zeitgeist, or whatever it is. It was better than the film.

It just worked—the way they put it all on and the band themselves performing the songs—and how well the songs sounded. I mean, the guy playing me happened to be six feet two, with big cheekbones and pretty lips. [laughter] You know, it just worked. He walked on stage, wearing a wee outfit I'd worn and then played "Teenage Rebel." I was nearly crying. Then it caught on in Belfast, more so than the film ever did. I mean, you've got a theatrical crowd going to see 1977 punk rock that they wouldn't have fucking listened to ever.

Kevin: There is also the historical plaque commemorating the Harp, and listing the Outcasts, Rudi, and the Stiffs.

Greg: Yeah, you got the plaque, but everything comes round.

Kevin: Then, you've got your jacket, which is on display in the Ulster Museum. How does that feel?

Greg: Do you know what? Once again, I can remember me and Getty sitting—it was always me and Getty's job, for some reason, to stud jackets and things—and we kept putting the studs right through the lining. When you put it on, it cut the whole skin off your back. [laughter] My mum goes, "For fuck's sake, give us that," and shown us how to get it through and leave it on the lining. Then, she sewed a wee in-layer thing. The day I went to the museum, my mum and dad were both dead. I just go, "If she'd stayed alive for one thing..."

The Ulster Museum is part of every Belfast family. During the Troubles thing, we didn't have a lot. I think that was one of my proudest moments, too, having my mum's handiwork in the museum. I don't get too carried away about the thing about the peace process and stuff, but there there's real truth there. At that moment in time without punk, how could anybody have gotten to meet anybody from the other side? That spread on then to the dance scene to all that there. Punk did possibly more in Belfast than it did anywhere. Not through great minds going on, or by osmosis, or just by fucking chance. But it did. It fucking did.

DENIS CHARMOT

TOP 5s

Abdul Vas

1. AC/DC, *The Razors Edge* LP
2. *AC/DC FAQ* by Susan Masino
3. *Akira* (movie, 1988)
4. *Beavis and Butthead* (series)
5. *Gunnm Alita Battle Angel* (manga)

Art Ettinger

- Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled LP
- Ramona, *Deals, Deals, Deals!* LP
- The Control Freaks, *She's the Bomb* LP
- Screaming Targets, *Carbon Copies* LP
- Conmen, *Get Loose* LP

Bill Pinkel

- The Spits and Surfbort, live in Long Beach
- Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled
- The Fleshies, *Introducing The Fleshies* LP
- Evening Standards, *World's End* LP
- Rewatching *Deadwood* the series and then the movie, what a show.

Billy Kostka

- Kaleidoscope, *After the Futures*
- Institute, *Readjusting the Locks*
- Haram, *Where Were You on 9/11?*
- Das Drip, Demo
- R.M.F.C., *Hive Vol. 1 & 2*

Chad Williams

1. Avail reunion in Richmond, Va.
2. Good Riddance, *Thoughts & Prayers* LP
3. Re-volts, *Leeches* 7"
4. Condor, *Singles 2017-2018* LP
5. Judas Priest at the Warfield, San Francisco \m/\m/

Chris Mason

1. The Rats, *In a Desperate Red* LP reissue
2. Breakout, *Say Hello* LP
3. C.H.E.W., Prude, Dots, Rolex, and Control Test at Nothing Left To Lose Fest, PDX
4. Out Cold, *Living Is Killing Me* LP
5. Primitive Teeth, Demo tape

Chris Terry

- Soul Glo, *The Nigga In Me Is Me* LP
- Rashomon, *Pathogen X* 12"
- Dad Brains, *Dadditude* 7"
- Limp Wrist, live in L.A.
- All the joy, excitement, and reconnections that came with bringing my novel *Black Card* into the world.

Craven Rock

1. Willem Van Spronsen (Rest In Power) giving his life to fight the I.C.E. Concentration Camp in Tacoma
2. Autonomous Mutant Festival 23
3. Phloxus County Fair with Second Narrows, Perfect People, Mala Fides, Toy, SBDC, Mattie Jo (of RVIVR), Deep Trench
4. Getting Seattle Storm (WNBA) tickets for giving blood
5. *Reality Hunger* by David Shields (book)

Daryl Gussin

- Snakes, *Psychic Rats demo* CS
- Bad Breeding, *Exiled* LP
- Kira Jari, *Spooky Freaky* 7"
- Urochromes, *Trope House* LP, tie with Shellshag, *18 Sycamore* 2 x LP
- Neutrals, *Kebab Disco* LP, tie with Pretty Flowers, *Golden Beat Sessions*

Designated Dale

1. Off With Their Heads, *Be Good* LP. Ryan Young and Co. bring it in fucking spades yet again with this monster full-length that's as much heavy as it has heart.
2. Hidden Spots, *New Me/New You* LP. After sitting on the shelf for over seven years after it was recorded, this album has thankfully been released unto some real appreciative motherfuckers, namely *me!* Undeniably addicting release.
3. DFMK, 06/29/19 at Cafe NELA. The power of Baja compels you! It is DFMK who commands you! Rock'n'roll that's as serious as a thrusting, bloody crucifix.
4. Tracy Soto, 08/09/19 at Cafe NELA. High-energy, hooks, and three-part harmonies that's not unlike getting punched in the face with three fists at once. Definitely catch 'em live.
5. Celebrating forty years of *Rock 'n' Roll High School* this year!

Eric Baskauskas

- Torche, *Admission*
- L.O.T.I.O.N., *World Wide W.E.B.*
- Loose Nukes, Demo 7"
- *Hello America* by J.G. Ballard (book)
- Green Day, *Live! Woodstock 94* LP

James Spooner

- Provoke, *Still Here* 7"
- Rata Negra, *Oido Absoluto*
- Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled LP
- *The Changing* by Victor Lavell (novel)
- The photography of Rob Coons (@robcoons)

Jimmy Alvarado

- DFMK, La Tuya, Storm House, and Sweet Reaper, 6/29/19 at Café NELA.
- La Tuya, Marriage Material, and Tracy Soto, 8/9/19 at Café NELA.
- Groovy Rednecks, Just Head, and La Tuya, 9/1/19 at Café NELA.
- All the other shows we saw and played at Café NELA.
- Thanks to Dave, Hope, Dirty Ed, and all the Café NELA crew for giving us, and L.A. punk, a "home." You will be missed.

Kayla Greet

- Joining Worriers for the end of their West Coast tour: Seattle at Belltown Yacht Club, Corvallis at Mudville Stadium, Oakland, and L.A.
- Amyl And The Sniffers, Alice Bag, Moss at The Telegram Ballroom, L.A. b/w an awesome Amyl And The Sniffers video shoot for "GFY" in the street after the show.
- *Invisible Women* by Caroline Criado-Perez (book)
- Despise You backyard brickfire pizza party with RZC friends and Chris Dodge.
- Off With Their Heads, *Be Good*

Kevin Dunn

1. Dots, Self-titled
2. Kira Jari, *Spooky Freaky*
3. Second Narrows, Self-titled
4. Martha, *Love Keeps Kicking*
5. *Black Card* by Chris Terry (book)

Kurt Morris

1. Motörhead, *No Remorse*
2. Mannequin Pussy, *Patience*
3. Propagandhi (everything)
4. Anarchist history in Boston
5. Motörhead, *Overkill*

Martin Wong

1. The Linda Lindas opening Bleached's rad record release show for *Don't You Think You've Had Enough?* at the Moroccan and playing with the legendary Alice Bag and badass Midnite Snaxxx at the Hi-Hat.
2. Alice Bag and Amyl And The Sniffers at the Teragram, holy crap!
3. Channel 3 at the Redwood and the band's essential new *Bellwether* EP.
4. Phranc at the Folly Bowl. Every show she plays is a special occasion, but this backyard show was gorgeous beyond belief.
5. Scoring cheap tickets for OFF!, Misfits, X and The Damned, and Blondie and Elvis Costello, and all the free outdoor, summertime shows around L.A., too.

Matt Average

• The Dogs, *Sick as A Dog* LP
• Neutrals, *Kebab Disco* LP
• Nations On Fire, *Burn Again* 12" EP
• Malcria, *El Reino De Lo Faiso* 12" EP
• Lucifer, live, and both albums

Mike Faloon

1. The B-52's
2. Mickey Hess, *A Guest in the House of Hip Hop – How Rap Music Taught a Kid From Kentucky What a White Ally Should be* (book)
3. Naomi Klein, *No Is Not Enough* (book)
4. J. Robbins, *Unbecoming* CD and Jawbox live (!)
5. Thumbscrew, *Ours* CD

Mike Fournier

• Jawbox at Brooklyn Steel, Brooklyn, NY 6/22/19 (with Faloon and Grillo)
• Reading with Mike Faloon and Jasmine Dreame Wagner at Quimby's, Brooklyn, NY 6/23/19
• Solid Sound Festival at Mass MOCA, North Adams, Mass. 6/28-30/19. Great sets by Lithics, Courtney Barnett, The Feelies, Wilco, and Jonathan Richman (with Bec and Rich K.)
• *Minor Leagues* #8
• Screaming Females and ExMaid at Ralph's, Worcester, Mass. 8/1/19 (with Austin and Ladew)

Mike Frame

1. Mariee Sioux, *Grief in Exile*
2. Darkthrone, *Old Star*
3. False, *Portent*
4. Darkened Nocturn Slaughtercult, *Mardom*
5. Frosthelm, live in Bismarck, N.D.

DJ Naked Rob
Radio Valencia 87.9FM | SF

1. Multicult, *Simultaneity Now* LP
2. *Hickoids, All the World's a Dressing Room: Live*
3. Hoaries, *Crudforms 1-3*
4. Xenu & The Thetans, Self-titled LP
5. Cement Shoes, *Too* LP

Ollie Mikse

Best albums of 2019 (so far)
• Bob Mould, *Sunshine Rock*
• Mannequin, Pussy *Patience*
• Jenny Lewis, *On the Line*
• The Fleshies, *Introducing the Fleshies*
• Deerhunter, *Why Hasn't Everything Already Disappeared?*

Paul J. Comeau

Top 5 Current Bands You Should Be Listening To
• Hans Gruber And The Die Hards
• Knee-Jerk
• Corrode
• Cry Havoc!
• Brother

Paul Silver

• Jawbox and Craig Werden at the Regent, Los Angeles
• The Whips (DC), *What We Talk About When We Talk About Rock* LP
• The Proletariat, *Move* LP
• Off With Their Heads, *Be Good* LP
• Bad Cop/Bad Cop, Dog Party, Pity Party at Soda Bar, San Diego

Rene Navarro

1. Los Lucha Brothers (specifically Pentagon Dark "0 Miedo")
2. Winning three consecutive gold medals with Jiu Jitsu World League (that was a good run for me).
3. Animal's Revenge, *Demo 2016*
4. Snakes, *Psychic Rats* demo CS
5. Podcasting

Rev. Norb

• Les Bof!, *"Voila!"* LP
• Geoff Palmer, *Pulling Out All the Stops* CD
• Corner Boys, *Waiting For 2020* LP
• Dots, Self-titled LP
• Faux Ferocity, *Pretty Groovy* CS

Rich Cocksedge

• Night Birds, Natterers, Asbestos Beach live at The Boston Music Room, London
• Jerry Seinfeld live at The Apollo, London
• Charlotte Matou um Cara, Self-titled CD
• Werecats, *Destined for the Outside* CD
• Dinged Up, *Mucho Dolor* CD

Rick V.

Fort Worth DIY space 1919 Hemphill is apparently closed for good. Top Five events I attended.
1. Bill Daniels's *Who Is Bozo Texino* screening where someone painted a mural of the final scene of the documentary upstairs.
2. A poorly attended Onion Flavored Rings show where they played an hour-long set to a very excited six people.
3. People Men show where I set my cymbals on fire while a fire breather kept them aflame.
4. Numina (spelling?) performance artist, taking off layers of business attire while hula hooping in a kiddie pool and making dinosaur noises.
5. Subhumans cover show we did where I handed the microphone to a kid in the crowd to sing "No" because I had to go talk to a cop downstairs.

RoQue Torres

1. *Carlos Almaraz: Playing with Fire Painter, Poet, American Master* (2019, documentary) Los Angeles Latino Film Festival 2019 at the TCL Chinese Theatre in Hollywood
2. *Juxtapoz Black & White,* published by Gingko Press. Twenty-eight contemporary artists who have built oeuvres in black and white.
3. *To Be Dalí.* Play by Eric Yost and Salvador Benavidez at Casa 0101 Theatre, Boyle Heights, East L.A.
4. Noche De Poemas 2 open mic performance by Los Fauna at Eastside Luv Wine Bar Y Queso in Boyle Heights, East L.A.
5. *Skins* photography by Gavin Watson, published by Independent Music Press

Ryan Nichols

1. The Dogs, *1994-1998: Sick as a Dog* LP
2. The Invaders, *Spacing Out* LP
3. Disgraceland (podcast)
4. The Bridge To Nowhere, California
5. Blitz, *Second Empire Justice* LP

Sean Koepenick

Highly Anticipated Shows
1. Richie Ramone with Wimpy Rutherford doing an all-Queers set with The Cryptics, Ralph's Diner, Worchester, Mass. 09/01/19
2. The Vibrators with Duck And Cover, O'Brien's, Allston, Mass. 09/05/19
3. Black Flag with The Linecutters, The Vault, New Bedford, Mass. 08/17/19
4. Superchunk (acoustic), Somerville Theatre, Somerville, Mass. 11/06/19
5. Raging Nathans and Loser's Circle, O'Briens, Allston, Mass. 08/23/19

Steve Adamyk

• Plastic Heads, *Nowhere to Run* (first by a long shot)
• Condor, *2017-2018 Singles* LP
• Martha, *Love Keeps Kicking*
• Priors, *Call for You*
• Swearin' and Mike Krol, live

Tim Brooks

• Ocean Colour Scene, *Hundred Mile High City*
• The Farm, *Too Late*
• Julian Cope, *Beautiful Love*
• Adam And The Ants, *Stand and Deliver*
• Dub Pistols, *Mucky Weekend*

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *Family*
2. *The Mustang*
3. *The Bill Murray Stories: Life Lessons Learned from a Mythical Man*
4. *The Art of Self Defense*
5. *The Professor*

Todd Taylor

• Amyl And The Sniffers, Self-titled LP
• Soul Glo, *The N in Me Is Me* LP
• Kira Jari, *Spooky Freaky* 7"
• Neutrals, *Kebab Disco* LP
• *Black Card* by Chris L. Terry (book)
• *Student Teaching Journal* + Illustrations from a body of work titled, *I Like Making Art with You*, by Elly Dallas (zine)
• Condor, *Singles 2017-2018* LP tie Eat My Fear *Taking Back Space* 7"

Ty Stranglehold

1. Weird Numbers, *Minotaur Dreams* 7"
2. TV's Daniel, Self-titled 7"
3. Second Narrows, Self-titled
4. Booji Boys, *Tube Reducer* LP
5. The Freeze, *Calling All Creatures* LP

RECORD REVIEWS

ADRENALIN O.D.: ***Let's Barbeque Millennium Edition:*** **LP**
New Jersey's 1980s phenomenon Adrenalin O.D. mixed sophomoric, puerile humor and fast hardcore to scientific perfection. Like with their Millennium Editions for other classic bands like MDC, Beer City provides the 1983 A.O.D. EP *Let's Barbeque* with a gorgeous reissue. Side A contains the songs from the original 7", as well as a track from that same session that was previously unreleased. Side B contains five tracks from the A.O.D. demo tape that came out in 1982, which were never rerecorded for subsequent releases. The 45 RPM 12" format provides optimum sound quality. It's limited to a thousand copies and was originally released on Record Store Day 2019. This is the punk vinyl equivalent of a Criterion Collection DVD. Beer City deserves major kudos for taking classic punk and hardcore so seriously. –Art Ettinger (Beer City)

ADULT MAGIC: Self-titled: LP
Perfectly fine mid-paced pop punk that works. Adult Magic are sad but trying (aren't we all), over-enunciated but not offensive. I want to say they're indistinguishable from other bands that sound like them, but I could be wrong. –Matt Werts (Dead Broke / Specialist Subject)

AFTERBOLTXEBIKE: Self-titled: CS
Anti-capitalist, anti-fascist, anti-racist, and one hundred percent communist punk from Nuevo Leon, Mexico. The cover shows the band sitting in front of a table spread out with several classic punk records including Black Flag, Bad Religion, Operation Ivy, and Sick Of It All but their sound is more of the vein of street punk and at their toughest reminiscent of early Fucked Up. The lyrics are all in Spanish and are what you would expect from an anti-authoritarian band with subjects such as killing fascists, living in an exhausting working class society, and the importance of reading ("read to study, read to learn, read to liberate!") As part of the proletariat, I identify with much of what they're pissed about, particularly the lyrics in "No Pasaran": "I'm sick of waking up at 4AM day after day, not to go running, not to eat, not even to watch TV… moonlighting not for fun but for necessity…" That's me! Good stuff! –Juan Espinosa (Rebel Time)

AGGRAVATED, THE: ***No Way Out:*** **CD**
Hardcore punk from the Atlanta, Ga. area with plenty of metal overtones, not unlike late-'80s G.B.H or Exploited, including a very clicky double kick drum. Pissed-off, heavy, and very well played. A couple lyrics give me pause though: "All this hate / Built inside I can't deny / All this hate / Built inside I don't know why / Like a time bomb / Ready to explode… When will you see it? / The proof is why you stare / Killing everyone / Blaming the weapons / That we have / Crisis actors, media bias / That never tell the truth / They are all fucking liars / Playing you for a fool." A hateful person, with guns, blaming the media, and ready to explode. Where have we heard that story before? –Chad Williams (D-Fens)

ALPHA HOPPER: Self-titled: LP
This is a cool mix of no-wave and mathy noise rock that takes plenty of cues from Jesus Lizard while, amazingly, manages to sound absolutely nothing like Jesus Lizard. It's all in the riffs, as they say. It took me a few songs to really "get" the unconventional vocal delivery style, but the payoff is huge as I'm now convinced that the vocals are what really set this apart from everything else. Good stuff. –Mark Twistworthy (Swimming Faith)

ANTI-CORPOS: ***Contra Ataque:*** **7" EP**
Feminist lesbian hardcore, per their Bandcamp page. The music is tight with a lot of stop-on-a-dime tempo changes and lyrics addressing issues surrounding feminism, discrimination based on gender and sexuality, and coping in a patriarchal society. Loud and fueled by righteous anger. –Jimmy Alvarado (Emancy Punx)

ASBESTOS BEACH: ***Tape:*** **CS**
I saw this Glasgow/Sheffield-based trio support Night Birds and Natterers recently in London and it created one hell of a din, which lead me to acquiring a copy of this cassette. This is ugly and wild hardcore which rages and screams with no let up across the eight tracks. The recording adds to the cacophony. It allows the band to really let loose without coming off the rails whilst delivering its onslaught. Good stuff. –Rich Cocksedge (Self-released)

BAD BREEDING: ***Exiled:*** **LP**
This sounds so inherently British, but unlike anything else I've ever heard. It feels like the natural progression of both Conflict (driving aggression) and Thatcher On Acid (dynamic and innovative). Yet on top of the melding of those two seemingly incongruent sounds it fits perfectly in the fucked up worlds of Total Control, Dream Decay, Diät, or Johns (Buffalo, NY), with some added rusted chrome Albini flavor. Shout out to Iron Lung for bringing this noise stateside. –Daryl (Iron Lung)

BAD MOJOS: ***I Hope You OD:*** **CD**
In your face, blaring, four-on-the-floor garage punk. A mix of the Spits, the Briefs, and really any other poppy, fast, and sloppy pop punk band you want to put in. Probably the easiest band to compare them to is The Heartburns, but how many people talk about The Heartburns anymore? There really is very little I think I could add to recommend this record more highly. It's got it all. Catchy pop hooks, blown-out vocals, concise bursts of thought. Highly, highly recommended. –Gwen Static (Voodoo Rhythm)

BARREN MARYS: ***Wired Wrong:*** **CD**
I could see a time where I gave this a better review. It kind of reminds me of the stuff I used to listen to when I was a teenager, and I probably would have put a song or two on a mixtape at a time. There's some decent stuff here, but something's missing. Honestly, I wonder if it was just that I think this would be a more fun album if it was recorded sloppier. It just sort of sounds like an also-ran It's Alive release from ten years ago that bought studio time at the wrong place. –Gwen Static (Violated / Franken Sense)

BELUSHI SPEED BALL: ***Prepare for Trouble:*** **CD**
The band calls themselves "Nintendocore" and admits they write songs that only twelve people may get the lyrical references. I'm probably not in that demographic, but I did know who the first song was about. They remind me a bit of a more metal version of John Walsh (the Ohio band not the TV dude.) –Sean Koepenick (Gubbey)

BILLY LIAR: ***Some Legacy:*** **CD**
Billy is well known for his stirring versions of acoustic punk in his native Scotland, but here a full band provides the backup. Oh yeah, there is a ringer in the band—Joe McMahon (of Smoke Or Fire) plays and produces too. These songs are about change and whether it helps or hurts, or maybe it's up to you to decide in the end. "Independent People" wouldn't be out of place on a Billy Bragg record. "Noose" has some lyrics that will make you smile when you're sipping on your drink of choice. Thought-provoking and worth grabbing a copy for yourself. –Sean Koepenick (Red Scare)

BLACK WIDOWS / THE 99ERS: Split: 7"
Black Widows are my kind of surf band. They inject their songs full of punk snarl, demanding attention, refusing to let their tunes fade into background noise like so many other surf bands seem content to do. "Mummy Mama Boogie" is not only an absolute jam, lyrically it puts a perfect feminist twist on the mummy legend. The 99ers play pop punk. "Girl Eyes" is about the difficulty that men sometimes seem to have finding things in their own homes, instead relying on the eyes of the women in their lives. "Girl eyes find and Boy's eyes are surprised." Such a great concept for a song, boosted further by catchy, bouncy music. –Emma Alice Johnson (Man Della / Jerkoff / Ratgirl)

BOBBY'S OAR: ***Knots:*** **CD**
This is another strong release from Greg Hughes and friends. The first song is just him and a guitar with a short burst of a keyboard, bass, and drums at the crescendo. It's about making a decision about where to direct your energy. Do you really want to exhaust yourself making money for someone else, just to get a small cut left for what you need? Bobby's Oar says no fucking way and asks "Why not give all the time you have to the things you love?" It's less than a minute, but "Tired Eyes" sets the tone for the heartfelt messages of love and struggle that Greg spits straight from his soul. At first the keys really took me out of it, but once I focused on the words, I realized we were in punk church. He has this way of getting across anger motivated by aspirational hope. There's so many sweet snapshots of how life can be adventurous before it becomes fleeting. While there are only four tracks here, they hurt in that they remind me of a time that's lost to my youth, but I am also reeled back in by moments of unknown possibilities

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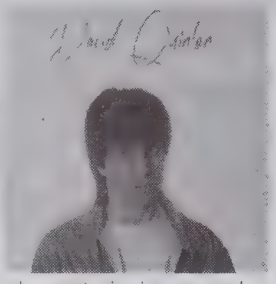

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we haven't met yet. Musically it's a little folky, a dash of honky tonk, and lots of bubbling rock'n'roll with a punk edge. Let it spin a few times and settle in. –Kayla Greet (Self-released)

BONEFIRE: *Fade and Decay:* LP
Crusty metal stuff featuring folks from Misery, Troublemaker, and Social Schism. There's a skeleton on the cover that kind of looks like it's getting electrocuted, lots of downtuned bass solos, and "There's a killer loose, oh can't you see / The reaper's coming for you and me" serves as standard lyrical content within. Not my bag at all, but I also recognize that a ton of effort went into this—these folks are solid musicians, it's recorded well, and the label went all out with stickers and a crazy gigantic newsprint poster/lyric sheet. –Keith Rosson (FTWNU2)

BOOJI BOYS: *Tube Reducer:* LP
The pride of Halifax is back with their third album and I couldn't be happier. With their first two albums, Booji Boys solidified their place as the kings of low-resolution party hardcore (or "pardcore" as I like to call it). I often find myself telling people, "No, your speakers aren't wrecked. It's supposed to sound like that." It's true that there have been some complaints about the frapped-out approach that the Boojis are know for, but I'm not one. I love the feeling that you're discovering these ripping tunes which are seemingly from another time and place, but the realization soon creeps in that this exists in the here and now. You're not late to the party! There is no question in my mind this band absolutely rules when they play live. I am still patiently waiting for them to come out west and show me. *Tube Reducer* is yet another stellar chapter in the story of these Maritime madmen! You need this in your life! –Ty Stranglehold (Drunken Sailor)

BRAINOIL: *Singularity to Extinction:* CD
I can't claim to be some sort of metal "fan" as it were, though I do have my favorites. This appears to be some sort of extreme deathy/blacky/crunchy kind of metal. The vocals are cookie monster screams, and I could take or leave 'em, but the real question is, how are the riffs? That's the only fair way to assess a metal album. From my perspective, the riffs are pretty damn monstrous loud, heavy, and reliant more on melody than speed. Pretty good shit, but I'm no metal head. –Gwen Static (Tankcrimes)

BRANDY: *Clown Pain:* 7"
Both tracks here are repetitive, hypnotic, potent bits o' punk noise-mongering. Sound is a tad blown out for effect, but the sonics overall pack a wallop while the band themselves batter away at the senses for six minutes in ways that fans of Dïat might appreciate. –Jimmy Alvarado (Total Punk)

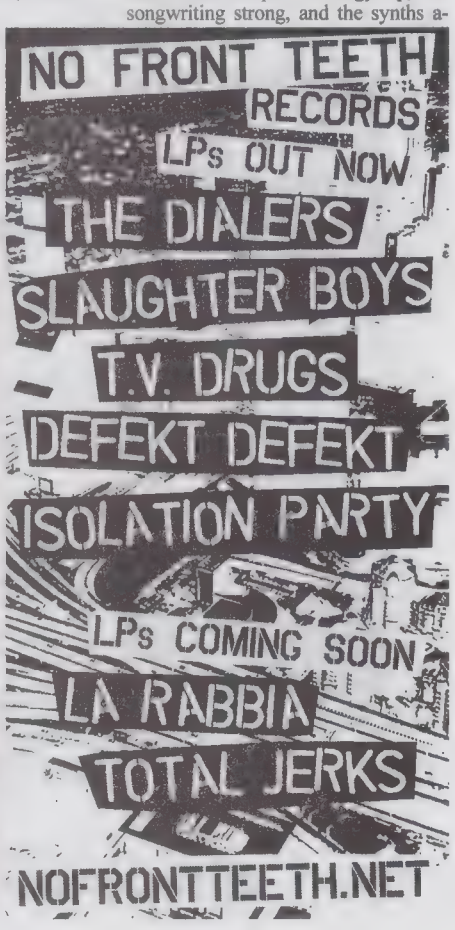
BRIEFS, THE: *Platinum Rats:* LP
By my recollection, this is their first album of new material in more than a decade. They sound like they never went on hiatus, picking up right where they left off, with a solid selection of early L.A.-via-Pacific Northwest anthems, all bangers fueled by devastating hooks and a sly bite to the lyrics. Always had a soft spot for 'em, and it's nice to see they're back in action. –Jimmy Alvarado (Burger)

BRITT: *Kill the Man:* CD
When I saw the cover to this CD, which is the upper half of singer Brittany Johnson's face with the phrase "Kill the Man" carved into her forehead, I was like, "YES! YES! YES! This is going to be some chaotic metal type shit!" Alas, it was not. It reminded me more of Chelsea Wolfe minus the doom metal influence. These six songs are well-crafted, but they're more indie pop with a slightly darker vibe. Perhaps like something that would've come out on Dischord in the '90s. They're very well done and finely crafted tunes, but I'm not sure most *Razorcake* readers will be the target audience. However, if you feel like expanding your musical tastes into some moody indie pop tunes with great vocals, this should do quite nicely. –Kurt Morris (Poison Moon)

BULBULATORS: *Aut Punk Aut Nihil:* LP
Another quality punk record from Poland. While not groundbreaking, this is solid punk rock in the mid-'00s Swedish vein, sung in Polish, with catchy melodies and plenty of grit. –Chad Williams (Pasazer / Combat Rock)

CAR BOMB DRIVER: *Blessed to be Damned:* CD
Super creepy stalker vibes; someone report this shit and I never want to hear about this band ever fucking again. It's not edgy, it's not funny, it's just a total bastardization of what political punk (like the Dead Kennedys, who they claim as an influence) can be. I assume this band fancies themselves as cut from the "punk rock is supposed to be shocking, I'm just illuminating the horrors of our society through satire" variety, but someone (me, I guess) should let them know that writing songs about stalking and beating women even if you think it's a joke is not incisive political commentary and that trying to dive into the psyche of a "lonely ordinary guy" who ends up killing a woman is not even close to original or cool. "I am just your average lonely ordinary guy…Come on baby just give me a chance / or you'll regret it I can promise that / I just wanna be your man / I just wanna smash your face / I just wanna crush your skull / I just wanna snap your neck / I just want you to want me"—it's seriously beyond me that anyone could be into this. But don't worry; there is something that me and this band agree on (from what I can tell from the deep-dive down a Florida punk message board): they suck. Will be burning this record. –Theresa W. (Red Hawk)

CAVE CURSE: *Buried:* 7"
Two tracks of aggressive new wave. Both tunes keep the energy up, the songwriting strong, and the synths a-



soarin'. Limited to 255 copies. –Jimmy Alvarado (Goodbye Boozy)

CEMENT SHOES: *Too:* LP
Sometimes the best records are the ones I have the hardest time describing. Sure, I can rely on comparisons to bands such as Cülo and their recklessness or the off kilter mania of the Shitty Limits or even a melding of the two, but there's still a lot more going on beneath the surface here. There's some chemically induced Wayne Kramer psychedelia in between the guitar riffs that aren't driving punk or manic hardcore: speaking of which I wouldn't be surprised if one or all of the band members ate shrooms like candy, but I also wouldn't be surprised if they were all stone sober. The cover artwork is surely a sight to behold: drawings of various unsavory looking characters (including the devil himself) doing everything from drinking wine to preaching nonsense imposed over a photograph of a graveyard and various headstones. Okay I take it back, there are definitely drugs involved here. Perhaps the best description is the album's hype sticker that has the ringing endorsements of both Ron House (Thomas Jefferson Slave Apartments) and a member of Japanese hardcore legends Death Side: "I thought I hated hardcore but you guys are really cool!" and "Good song" respectively. You can't argue with results. Get this. –Juan Espinosa (Feel It)

CH3: *The Bellwether:* 12" EP
Seemingly out of nowhere comes this new record. How is that possible in this internet wasteland we live in today? Apparently, the band kept it a secret somehow and it just made it all the better. "Blackballed" is punchy and chugs along with melodic intensity. "Mendiolas 1983" is a surf instrumental that a fan recently did an old school video for featuring some sick skate/surf moves. Before I got my copy, I was hoping that the last song was a Plimsouls cover and my wish came true! Grab this direct from the label on vinyl and crank it. Trust me. –Sean Koepenick (Hostage)

CHAI: *PUNK:* CS
I had run into this band on a past occasion, and despite the title, calling this a punk record would be a bit of a stretch. There's certainly a vibe of early '80s new wave/punk where the lines became blurred, reminiscent of that slice of time where the scenes and technology were transitioning simultaneously. In the end, what you get is a mix of messy pop, guitar rock, and eccentric melodies. It's bizarre and catchy. Far outside this magazine's normal zone of reference, but I can't fault it. It's a solid record. Good for summertime beach jams, as Burger releases often are. –Gwen Static (Burger)

CHILTON: *Little Birds:* LP
Here's a weird one. Technical melodic punk with obscure and often tongue-in-cheek lyrics that touch on aliens, conspiracy theories, and self-destructive tendencies, among other topics. Several wacky cult-related samples are scattered among the tracks, including some gobbledygook from one of those people who claim to interpret messages from star people, so that's fun. Anyway, Bill Stevenson plays guitar on this, and I'm definitely getting a lot of latter-day Descendents and ALL vibes from the huge hook-y choruses and quirky riffage. This stuff has a harder edge and gets a lot more dissonant and wonky, bouncing around between keys and time signatures like it's nothing. Some hits and some misses, but I definitely won't call it predictable. –Indiana Laub (Dead Broke)

CHRONIC ABUSE: *Civil Society:* 7" EP
A Blood Pressure dude and a member of Short Fuse get their UK82 hardcore on. The four tunes are true to form—simple, politically oriented, hard-hitting—keeping tempos at a steady gallop pace and the sound clean but punchy. Two hundred pressed, each with one of different forty photos one of the members took around his hometown. Thumbs up. –Jimmy Alvarado (Amok)

CJ RAMONE: *The Holy Spell...*: CD
New record from CJ finds him honing his craft and the songwriting seems to be on a razor sharp edge. Backed by Pete Sosa (Street Dogs) and Dan Root (Adolescents), how could it not? The themes here are universal. Overcoming loss and standing up for yourself are things any of us can do if we try. The music is played with precision and concentrated melody. "Hands of Mine" shows that CJ's not afraid to takes risks with song structures if the end result is beautiful. And who knew that Graham Parker actually wrote punk songs? Solid. –Sean Koepenick (Fat)

CLEAN BREAK: Self-titled: 7"
Clean Break is a snarling band from Faro, Portugal, and they're a mix of sounds and sensibilities: straight edge done with a fast crust punk sound, at least to my ears. Although neither consistently nor overtly straight edge in the lyrical content, they seem to be more about the spirit rather than the specifics of the message. It reminds me a lot of early 7 Seconds meets Squalora. Well done, gents. Well done, indeed. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Refuse)

CONDOR: *Singles 2017-2018:* 12"
At first glance, it might seem a smidge too early to be releasing a singles collection, with songs from just the last two years. However, this is the first time on vinyl for all of these songs, and the quality is high enough to be deserving of a 12" platter. Condor is a one-man operation out of France. While Maxime Smadja has apparently been involved in many respected punk and hardcore outfits, Condor is the first one I've heard of him. Despite the lo-fi, mono recordings (and French language lyrics), the strength of the songs shines through. Equal parts early California punk and Templars-style oi, Condor has riffs, leads, melodies and enough originality to require repeat spins. –Chad Williams (Beach Impediment)

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***Last One Standing:* 7"**
I've been a Kepi Ghoulie fan since *World Contact Day*. I've been pretty loyal through his post-Groovie Ghoulies years, including the funnecessary re-recordings of the Ghoulies albums. There are a lot of gems in there and some songs that will stay with me for the rest of my life. His love for what he's doing always comes through. Some of it though just seems kind of tepid to me and not really worth listening to more than once, and his side of this split is a good example. Even with the help of Kevin and Allyson Seconds, the songs don't pop. And what's pop punk without the pop? The Copyrights save the day with their original, "Welcome Wagon," and their rollicking cover of the Ghoulies classic, "Are You Passionate?" –Emma Alice Johnson (Red Scare / Stardumb)

CORRODE: *Age of Ruin:* CS
I knew Corrode was going to be amazing before I'd even heard the tape and I was not disappointed. Composed of ex-members of Vaccine, Relics, and a catalog of other bands, Corrode plays dark and heavy hardcore punk as raw as their name suggests. With political messages in their lyrics, and breakdowns sure to get you moshing, what more could you want? –Paul J. Comeau (Corrode, Corrodehc@gmail.com)

COULORED BALLS:
***"Flash" b/w "Dave the Rave":* 7"**
This Australian band's '70s output continues to see light due to several reissues in recent years. I haven't found anything not to like about this somewhat obscure pub rock band. They are solid providers of the bovver sound. This is a repro of a promo single found on many glam-enthusiasts want list. The original '73 release precedes the band's classic *Ball Power* LP. If there's any reason for this single not to be essential it's because "Flash" is the first track on the *Ball Power* album. But the B Side, "Dave the Rave," is a scorcher for the boogie with high cuffs crowd. –Billups Allen (Just Add Water)

CUTTLEFISH 3000 / SILVERWIGS:
Split: LP
All too frequently split records have two bands that sound so similar I have to check the track listing to tell when they've switched. Happily, this is not the case for this record. Cuttlefish have that stripped-down, don't-give-a-fuck messy punk sound with raspy, shouted vocals. There's a grit and almost grunge to it. Silverwigs, by comparison, sound pop punky—light, bouncy, and melodic. It's full of harmonies and woah's. It's immediately apparent when the bands swap. Speaking of swapping, I particularly enjoyed the sharing of duties between the two lead vocalists in the Silverwigs tracks. –Lorien Lamarr (Debt Offensive)

CYBERPLASM:
***The Psychic Hologram:* LP**
This is a hardcore industrial mess, and I mean that in the best possible way. I hear all kinds of stuff in this, including some powerviolence, Japanese hardcore, and d-beat influences, but not before they ran it through a "make this sound fucking crazy" music filter, making everything sound overly processed and ultimately, "industrial," I guess. This was a weird, uncomfortable listen. –Mark Twistworthy (Iron Lung)

DAD BRAINS: *Dadditude:* 7"
To become a parent is to understand that the clichés are true. Parenting is the hardest, best, most fulfilling thing you'll ever do, and there's no better way to put it. California's Dad Brains mine the intense highs and lows of family life on this fun and fulfilling EP. *Dadditude* features four shout-along hardcore anthems, including a mosh song about pushing a stroller, a fatherly update to "Attitude" by Bad Brains, and a Father's Day carol that I caught myself singing long after the needle had lifted. From the catchy songs to the cover art that spoofs Shelter and Bad Brains, this is a well-planned and executed record that should put a smile on the face of any punk parents that you know. The only question is how did these dads find the time to do it? –Chris Terry (Pirates Press)

DAN WEBB AND THE SPIDERS:
***Be Alright:* LP**
Be Alright keeps the progression of this band's output going in, like, a steady climb, you know what I mean? It's still very much the band I'm familiar with and have been enjoying for almost a decade. There's still the same melodies buried beneath the fuzz, and Webb's clear, discernable lyrics tackle much of the same "down on my luck" emotional scope as they always have. But it's also an album rife with neat little pick-me-ups and successful experiments, like in "Best Regret," where the guitars drop out entirely for a significant portion of the song, or "Acme Girls," with its almost '60s pop flavor. Great as ever, while also abundantly clear that the band—after ten years, five full-lengths and a ton of singles and splits – still has plenty of velocity left. –Keith Rosson (Gunner)

DAN WEBB AND THE SPIDERS:
***Now It Can Be Told, Vol. 2:* CD**
Damn, guys. The second collection from this group gathers the material from their incredible split LP with Bundles, a split 7" with Modern Saints, and a bunch of other unreleased and comp stuff from 2015-2017. I don't know what it is, maybe because they don't tour much, but this band is like the absolute poster child of the term "criminally underrated." They've put out five albums and a bunch of 7"s over a decade, and still remain relatively unknown in the States, which really sucks, because they're a fantastic band. Moving, precise, heartfelt, while still laid-back and discernable. They've got garage leanings but aren't frantic. Melodies abound, but the songs aren't cloying. Just a terrific, catchy band that writes songs about having a black cloud floating over your head. Glad this was released. –Keith Rosson (Gunner)

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DATA CONTROL: *It Was Nothing:* LP
Been a minute since I last heard anything from these cats and, from the tunes here, it sounds like they've been doing a bit of what used to be called "maturing" in their sound. Echoes of post-punk are married to some '60s psych pop, yet they lose none of the punk heft they've wielded so effectively on previous releases. Zinging basslines, the occasional dark, drone-infused musical passage, and jangling guitars abound, hitting multiple touch points of the underground simultaneously. Gotta admit I didn't expect them to take this road when I put the needle to the wax, but I'm glad they did 'cause they fuggin' nail it throughout and come out the other end with one helluva release under their belt. –Jimmy Alvarado (Den Magiska Cirkeln)

DATA DRUMS: *Asyndeta:* LP
You know those records you can just use as background noise? The kind you plop on and easily forget you're even listening to music? This is not that record. If you decide to check out Data Drums' *Asyndeta*, you've got to be prepared to actively listen to the whole damn thing. This art punk group from Memphis produced a raw, engaging, interesting effort that leaves the listener thirsty for more. Actually, listening to this LP is kind of like running a marathon, but at the end all you can drink is Coke. It might briefly quench your thirst, but it won't be long before you need to drink more. Case in point: I've made it through *Asyndeta* all the way, but I still feel like I need to go back and listen to it again. Which is a good thing, I think. Bottoms up. –Simone Carter (Also Tapered)

DESEOS PRIMITIVOS: *Exisitir:* 7" EP
Interesting mix of Modern Action-style modern-retro punk, raza-core, a touch of trash punk and an almost goth post-punk undertow, largely in the stringed instruments. The four songs here are angry, infectious, driving, and over too goddamned quick, which means hopefully more tuneage is on the way from 'em. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deseos Primitivos)

DEZERTER: *Nienawiść 100%:* 7"
Dezerter began in Warsaw, Poland in 1981. Thirty-eight years ago. I can't even begin to imagine what it must have been like to be a punk rocker in Poland in 1981. I feel like even Mike Ness, who is legendary for pontificating on how tough it was to be punk in the early '80s, would have to admit he doesn't know shit compared to what these guys have seen and gone through. Anyways, it is 2019 and Dezerter is back with a new three-song 7". The English translation of the lyrics was greatly appreciated so I could tell what's up. The title track translates to "Hate 100%." I found myself thinking a bit about Funeral Oration while listening. I love this record. –Ty Stranglehold (Pasazer)

DICKIES, THE: *"I Dig Go-Go Girls" b/w "The Dreaded Pigasaurus":* 7"
Do you need to hear The Dickies cover the Cheap Trick classic "I Dig Go-Go Girls" with Monkey from The Adicts on lead vocals? Of course you do. The Dickies don't need much of an introduction. One of the longest-running bands in the history of punk, they threw humor and nerdy behavior into their insanely catchy songs from the get-go, becoming the first California punk band to appear on national TV and to sign to a major label. Monkey's vocals gel well with their spirited cover on Side A. The flipside is a new Dickies original, replete with keyboards and saxophone. It's an amusing release for sure. –Art Ettinger (Slope)

DIPHALLIA: *The 14 Inch:* 7"
If you've heard the Quincy Punx at any point, you've pretty much heard this—straightforward, simple, and snotty. It's serviceable. –The Lord Kveldulfr (River Monster)

DOGS, THE:
***1994-1998: Sick as a Dog:* LP**
In high school my friend gave me a ride home and he was playing a cassette that caught my attention before we'd even left the parking lot. Every song was played like the band was on speed, and they probably were. The lyrics seemed to resent everything surrounding Southern Orange County. They were desperate, vicious, depressing, and constantly based around drug use, alcoholism, and rehab. The short ride home that day left a lasting impression on me and I hope this record gets into the hands and ears of other sixteen-year-olds who feel lost and alienated. In the way you need to warn people before introducing them to GG Allin, the same goes with these guys. They're not a band for kids. Gabe Hart (Jail Weddings, Starvations) did the honor of addressing the Dogs' nihilistic gang mentality in the liner notes. This record never came out, so this is more of an issue than a reissue. The release coincides with a limited run of coffin-shaped skateboards by Bat Skates. Do not sleep on either of these items, folks. –Ryan Nichols (Garage Rock)

DOGS, THE:
***1994-1998: Sick as a Dog:* LP**
A true lost classic here! These songs were recorded back in 1996 and lingered unreleased, until now. Why? I haven't a clue. These twelve songs are all killer and no filler, and, honestly, they stand in league with all the classic 1980 California hardcore punk bands. Think of Adolescents and early DI crossed with Rudimentary Peni, and nihilistic to the core. The music ranges from fast to mid-tempo, frantic, lurking, and raw. Pre-Broken Bottles, if you were wondering. You need this album. Get it! Limited to one hundred with a pin, embroidered coffin shaped patch, and hand numbered. –Matt Average (Garage Rock)

DOMAIN: *Retreat:* 7"
Domain has that youth crew straight edge sound that was making the rounds in the late '80s and early '90s. That sound can easily come off as derivative and clichéd, but these German dudes

make it sound fresh. Yet that might be because it's been a while since I've listened to this sort of stuff. I liked it. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Refuse)

DRILLING FOR BLASTING: ***Fingers Are the Best Eyes:*** **LP**
A bluesy Evens? Or a raw Timbuk 3? Maybe a little bit of both thrown in the blender? Either way, there are some post-punk grooves mixed in with some slash-and-burn guitar riffs overriding the proceedings. The lyrics are certainly left of center. I dig "Pumpkinseed (It's a Fish)" and "Lemon Cake." Why I am hungry now? –Sean Koepenick (Let's Pretend / Underground Communiqué / drillingforblasting.com)

DROWNS: ***The Sound:*** **7"**
I have *not* enjoyed this band before. As in, I've seen them at some point and wasn't feeling it. This means next to nothing. Maybe I didn't want to watch an opening band that night but tried anyway. Maybe they weren't *on* that night. Maybe I was in a bad mood. Maybe I got them mixed up with Drowning Pool. It really could be anything. Hopefully, my judgment was clouded and I won't have to dis my Seattle brethren. I'll just spin it with an open mind. Here goes. Why don't y'all stay with me on this one? **Starts record and sits down with liner notes* Hmm. Hmm. Multi-media. Plastic sleeve is screened with an ancient map of Seattle that meshes with the cardboard sleeve which has an aging photo of a very old Seattle. Swell layout. I like. Oh hi, Mt. Rainier right there in the liner notes. Hey! The song is about Mt. Rainier, too! It's a gang vocal song about returning home to Ol' Rainier. Yeah! **Sings along* "By the bricks of Ol' Rainier/ We will keep pushing on until the battle is won, by the bricks of old Rainier." I can get behind that. Now let's give it a flip. Got some scratchy but high and whispery vocals going on here. Reminds me of A Radio With Guts. It's a little slow for punk, kind of rock'n'roll. More regional pride, referencing Puget Sound: "our hearts in are in the Sound/ wherever we roam, it carries us home/ our hearts are in the Sound." I have to admit the Washington pride is a bit heavy-handed and sappy and I'm not sure how much someone from, say, Sheboygan, would relate, but no complaints here from their target audience. In fact, I'm going to get up and give it another spin. Yep, it's a keeper. –Craven Rock (Pirates Press)

DUMB VISION: ***Modern Things:*** **LP**
Dumb Vision, a garage punk outfit from Madison, Wis., don't leave much of an impression. On *Modern Things*, the songs are short and punchy but ultimately forgettable. Even after multiple listens, I don't find myself humming a single chorus or guitar hook. This is due, in part, to the lo-fi production, which has turned the drums into trashcans and buried the vocals eight feet deep. Also, why a song called "Pissing" is three minutes long and has so much vocal delay is beyond me. –Sean Arenas (Big Neck)

DUST HEART: ***The Last Gap + Plastic Walls:*** **7"**
Lathe cut single, limited edition of fifty copies, all hand numbered and collectible as heck. The band appears to have at least one member of Tin Horn Prayer and the sound is a real college rock, mid-tempo, melodic kinda vibe. I keep seeing the term "Americana" being thrown out with this kinda stuff, but this is indie rock at the core, not a twang or country feel in any way. A less punk Armchair Martian or some folks who play the shit out of the Bob Mould back catalog is what I would describe as happening here. Good, solid songwriting, playing, and recording quality. Fans of the style will love this. –Mike Frame (Snappy Little Numbers)

E.T. EXPLORE ME: ***Shine:*** **CD**
Trippy, fuzzed-out garage rock from the Netherlands. Frank Zappa, The Lyres, and even The Chesterfield Kings were probably all on their turntables with some frequency. "Soulbleed" has a spaghetti Western vibe, which is somewhat scary. There is a seven-minute song on this record which will probably take a while to unravel your brainwaves after a listen. "Butcher" is a good song that I don't think is about Sam from *The Brady Bunch*. I bet if I went to a show in their hometown there would be a lot of women who look like Nico dancing in the crowd. –Sean Koepenick (Voodoo Rhythm)

EAT MY FEAR: ***Taking Back Space:*** **7"**
I don't know what's facilitating the pipeline between me and great hardcore from Berlin, but keep it comin'. The second EP from this Berlin-based queer feminist hardcore band fucking rips and I cannot even count the number of people I know who need to hear the lyric "Your antifa patch only exists to make your jacket pretty" as a scathing indictment of political people who don't live their commitments beyond aesthetics. This hardcore though—this is what separates the worlds of the Cro-Mags and Pageninetynine—yeah, Eat My Fear are fucking pissed about migration, about transphobia, about feeling completely abandoned by a scene that supposedly respects them. It's also about the radical power that building a strong, supportive scene can have. So, you get the pissed-off venom (and, ultimately, correct) arguments of a band like War On Women alongside a celebration of the very fact that making this music gives us another way forward. –Theresa W. (Refuse / Emancy Punx)

EMBERS: ***Notes to Myself:*** **7"**
Ten years ago, this Málaga, Spain-based indie outfit called it a day but for whatever reason its members have reconvened long enough to write, record, and release four tracks on a 7". Embers includes Jamie Ruiz Green who is also in Jamie 4 President and Wild Animals. Embers moves along the spectrum between the dreamy pop of the former and the indie punk

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of the latter. This is especially good when cranked up nice and loud. –Rich Cocksedge (Pifia / La Agonia De Vivir / CGTH / Error! Music)

FAIL SONS: Demo Tape: CS
I didn't expect a DC band to make me feel nostalgic for the East Bay, but Fail Sons sound like they should be on mid-'90s Lookout Records. If you loved the Queers and Screeching Weasel back in the day but, you know, have a moral compass, this is a band picking up where that sound left off and with none of the toxicity. If it was 1997 this would have been released as a split with Pinhead Gunpowder. Subject matter like "BP Oil Spill of Human Misery" however brings you back to the present. This demo is an exciting mixture of riffy nostalgia and modern zeitgeist that I can't wait to hear more of. –Lorien Lamarr (Self-released)

FAUX FEROCIOUS: *Pretty Groovy:* CS
This Nashville band does a nice job of straddling the line between taut and wavey and rock and rolly, sounding not unlike if the first album by that old new wave band The Reds was good all the way through, or if Code Blue grew a pair. By the end of side two, things just sound like Can or some weird shit like that, but on the whole, this is seriously solid. Judging by what passes for artwork on this tape's J-card, Burger Records will not be satisfied with merely bringing back the cassette format, they also seem to be advancing the return of the inkjet printer. I dunno your feelings on the matter, but I simply can't wait until other awesome things like flat top beer cans and belted feminine hygiene products are back in vogue. BEST SONG "Stress Kills." BEST SONG TITLE: "Drop Kick Heartache." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Seriously, your packaging sucks. –Rev. Nørb (Burger)

FELCHERS: Self-titled: LP
When a band self-describes as having a Crucifucks influence, expectations rise. Doc Dart was one of the craziest vocalists in the history of punk, and this Midwest group has a similarly odd singer, as hyperbolic as that might seem. Under the carapace of bizarreness lies an insanely catchy record that fans of wild 1980s punk will absolutely adore. The record comes with a zine-like lyric insert that's almost as much of a trip as the record itself. Felchers don't feel like a tribute band, even though this could pass for a decades-old LP. Delivering on the bold promise of appealing to Crucifucks fans, this is one of the most exciting records of 2019. –Art Ettinger (General Speech)

FLASHLIGHTS: *Shadows and Lights:* LP
Secret Mission continues delivering fantastic vinyl releases of the best in Japanese punk. This already-classic 2016 album was remastered for vinyl for the first time in 2019 by Jeff Burke of Marked Men/Radioactivity. Light, dreamy vocals are backed with hooky melodic instrumentals. Only five hundred copies were pressed, with less than half going to the States. Make sure not to miss it! –Art Ettinger (Secret Mission)

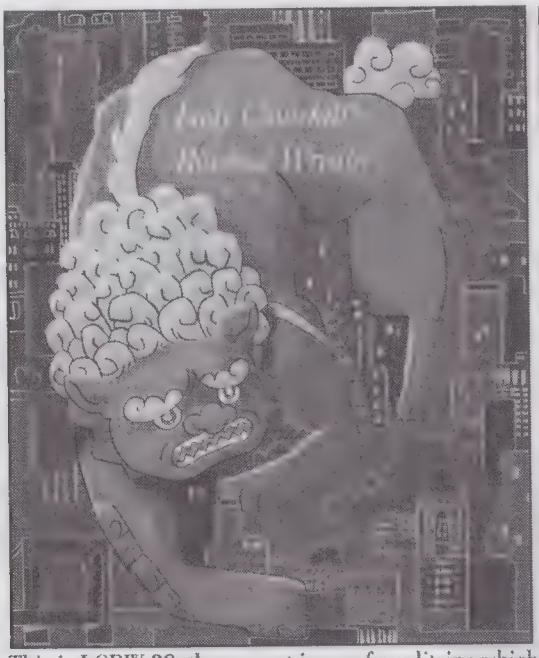
FOG, THE: Self-titled: 7" EP
German hardcore that is abrasive and takes no prisoners. Musically, it treads into Agnostic Front and Madball territory. Could I get behind the vocals? Not really but don't let that stop you. The artwork is cool. I just wish some earplugs were included. Pummeling. –Sean Koepenick (Refuse)

FRANKIE AND THE WITCH FINGERS: *Zam:* CS
This tape is laden with catchy choruses and extended jams. The skeleton of songs like "Realization" and "Pleasure" begin with basic tropes of solid garage hoppers igniting the lights under the mid-'60s dance floor. But the band's bridges and endings veer into some wild and unpredictable instrumental jamming with a bit of funk and some psych wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa-wa riffing on the guitars. I liked it. A little poppier than Fuzz, but I think a good listen for fans thereof. –Billups Allen (Burger)

FREEZE, THE: *Calling All Creatures:* LP
Has it really been twenty years since this band's last full length? Sure there have been some EPs along the way, but this record shows that Clif Hanger and the gang haven't lost a step. Bill Close rips it on lead guitar and if you thought this wasn't going to be punk rock, the bass player's name is Lunchmeat! Zach Carmichael holds it all together on rhythm guitar. Drums seem to be split here. We'll see what the future holds for who's going to be behind the kit. The songs are fast and furious and the lyrics ask all the right questions. What is our place in this world—and who is really watching and listening? Too tough to pick a favorite here so I won't bother. All the songs on this record have something special to offer you. Essential. –Sean Koepenick (Slope)

FUCK IT I QUIT: *In the Shadow of Extinction:* 7" EP
Ensign's singer has a new band, one—surprise!—that's doling out doses of feral hardcore. The band keeps the songs short—the longest clocks in just shy of two minutes, the shortest around five seconds and the majority of the rest rarely breaking the one-minute mark—and flailing while covering topical lyrical material. The metal is kept well in check and, though they sometimes feel like unfinished thoughts, the songs are quite good. –Jimmy Alvarado (Refuse)

GAME: *No One Wins:* LP
I was blown away by the 7"/flexi this band put out a couple years ago, so I had high hopes for this record. As a result, I got my hopes up too high and was a little disappointed upon my first listen, a sentiment I heard echoed by a few other people. I've since listened to it several times and am happy to say that it really has grown on me. It's similar to the 7" in execution, but they took advantage of the LP format and used the extra space to fill out some of



This is LCRW 39, the current issue of our litzine which we've been publishing twice a year or so since 1996. It's b&w, saddle stitched, and printed by the fine people at Paradise Copies in Northampton, MA, who we recommend for zines, etc. Get it for $5: online, in some great bookstores, or by check/cash by mail to the address over there. Inside: weird fiction, some poetry, a cooking column. 20% of our subscribers choose the chocolate option. The cover is "Gentrification" by Cynthia Yuen Cheng.

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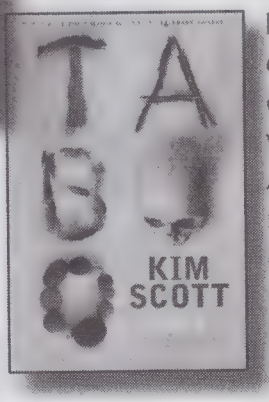


How do the descendants of white Australian settlers deal with their bloody history?

the song structures. The songs aren't any less intense; they're just a little more refined. Japanese influences (the press description name checks both Execute and Death Side) collide with other components of international '80s HC and some elements of early death metal (believe me, it works). Vocals in Polish and English—which is interesting because the album flows together cohesively—so it's cool to see how the vocals navigate the changes when switching back and forth between both languages. Of the whole "New Wave of British Hardcore" scene (Violent Reaction, Arm's Race, Stab, et cetera), this band is probably my favorite. –Ian Wise (Beach Impediment)

GENERATION SUICIDA: *Reflejos:* LP
Another moody release from L.A.'s post-punk four piece. They hit that sweet spot left vacant by bands like The Vicious and Gorilla Angreb. We're talking fast, sharp leads with those angular notes on guitar over cymbal-heavy drums that pummel through quick songs. Yes, their songs are all in Spanish. Yes, you can translate them online if you don't speak the language and want to learn it. Most of these tracks are about not being silenced, living through dark and violent times, death, and a little bit of drugs. It's a fairly bleak record with the atmospheric intensity that this group is so good at. One of the stand-out lyrics for me is "Las balas no discrimen / Solo saben matar" which translates to "bullets don't discriminate / They only know how to kill." With a record titled *Reflejos* (*Reflexes*), and the lyrics I read through, these songs are instinctive responses to discrimination, poverty, and class-based struggle, which are symptomatic of societal issues all on its own. In the closing track, "Desaparecer," they slow it way down and break out an acoustic guitar which adds a different feeling of weight than the rest of the record. In this song they say, "El futuro no se puede ver (The future can not be seen)" and leave me thinking about how I can change what is yet to come. While it's an emotionally overpowering record, I think they leave us with an anger that ignites change, rather than desperation. –Kayla Greet (Going Underground)

GOLDEN PELICANS: *Grinding for Gruel:* LP
Mid-tempo rock/metal with a snotty punk singer. Surprisingly, it works much better than it has any business doing. Resulting work recalls punk's "no rules" '70s era with punchier production. –Jimmy Alvarado (12XU)

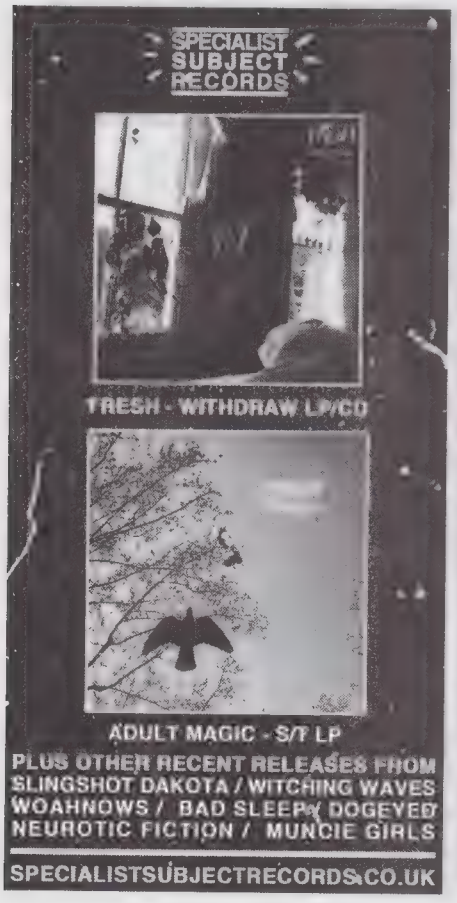
GOOD RIDDANCE: *Thoughts and Prayers:* CD
And just like that, time stands still. Similarly like so many others on the staple portion of Fat Wreck's roster, Good Riddance is back, as if they've never left. It's shocking how so many of the label's bands from the last twenty years can make records that sound relatively identical in performance to their original output. It's honestly wild. Not to mention, Russ Rankin and the group have essentially their original lineup intact—a rarity these days. *Thoughts and Prayers* is an apt album for the modern day, in both music and lyrical content. To an aging punk like me, at least, this seems more relevant that it has in a while. I caught them live last year for the first time since I was sixteen, and not only were they great, but yet again, time felt frozen. –Steve Adamyk (Fat)

GOOD RIDDANCE: *Thoughts and Prayers:* CD
I'll admit it—as the country falls deeper and deeper into xenophobia and divisiveness, as a heartbreakingly large portion of the nation decides that it's actually pretty okay with creeping authoritarianism after all, it's refreshing to hear a band of my peers—a band from my youth, truly—put out another "political punk" album. Better yet, they did it without embarrassing themselves or tossing out something half-realized. *Thoughts and Prayers* fits entirely within the scope of the band's previous outings—there are no great surprises here—but that works in their favor. It's topical, it's familiar, it's well done. It's fast, melodic, smartly produced skatepunk stuff. You know what you're getting into. –Keith Rosson (Fat)

GOOD SHADE: *Way Out:* LP
One man recording project that sounds, to these uneducated ears, like a cross between the swagger of Bad Sports and the glasses-on-the-tip-of-your-nose power pop of Statues. It's mostly fast, the melodies are impeccable and layered, and it sounds great even as it's an exploration of dark, gnarly personal themes. Fans of the label or this guy's previous efforts won't be disappointed. –Keith Rosson (Dirtnap)

GOVERNMENT FLU: *Vile Life:* 12" EP
Been a minute since I've heard anything from these kids, and man, do they deliver the goods here. Eleven helpings of Polish hardcore very much in the present while managing to recall *Victim In Pain*-era Agnostic Front sans any of the meatheadedness one might expect. Tight, taut, and zippy without striving for a land speed record, this hits all the right spots. –Jimmy Alvarado (Refuse)

HANS PREDATOR / HYPER TENSIONS: Split: CS
Hans Predator: Lo-fi bedroom synth pop. Punk in spirit, but sound is debatable. Hyper Tensions: Psyched-out garage rock that favors mid-tempo drone-outs. As a whole, the tape gives you drugged-out beach vibes for warm summer days. The pop melodies are prevalent enough from keeping this in the atonal garage category. Overall, a fun cassette. –Gwen Static (Let's Pretend / Neon Lava)



HEATSEEKER:
***On the Ropes:* 7"**
"Screaming and complaining don't mean a thing" is such an interesting lyric on a record that is essentially just a bunch of screaming and complaining. I know there's a place for basic angry hardcore, but part of me wonders if records full of dudes shouting clichés about being on the ropes and having no way out and breaking these chains are really relevant in 2019. I guess that's for the kids to decide. This lady's looking for more. –Emma Alice Johnson (Refuse)

HIDDEN SPOTS:
***New Me/New You:* LP**
Heavy power pop sensibilities atop a gruff punk template. Not a big fan of the growly vocal thing, but it works here and the noodly guitar bits peppered throughout make songs already working way above average that much sweeter. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

HIPPAES, THE:
***Hip! Hip!! Hippaes!!!:* CD**
This band is named after Sheri S. Tepper's Armageddon-obsessed space beasts from her sci-fi novel *Grass*, though not an author I've ever come across before. It also consists of people who have previously been found in Bangers, No Comply, and Attach Vipers, three U.K. bands I am fully conversant with. The result of this gathering of musicians is an excellent suite of songs ranging from indie rock through to raucous punk with the occasional theatrical and pop moments thrown in for good measure. I love the voices of both Roo Pescod and Kelly Kemp, and with vocal duties being shared fairly equally—as well as working in tandem at times—it means that this is a strong focal point for me. Pescod's guitar sound is frequently reminiscent of what he had in Bangers and that's yet another plus point in my book. The whole album has a great positive feel to it and it's one that can easily lift my mood if I'm down in the doldrums. –Rich Cocksedge (Everything Sucks)

HONEYCHAIN: *"Go Away" b/w "Goin' Through Your Purse":* 7"
"Go Away" is easily Honeychain's best song so far. It's got a cool, gritty garage vibe to it which is a few steps away from the cleaner sound this L.A. trio has previously exhibited. It's a simple song with a simple structure but it's extremely catchy and hits the mark. The flipside is a cover of a Material Issue track from 1994 and I must admit to having no previous knowledge of that band. However, using the resources at my disposable I can confirm that Honeychain's version of what is a great power pop tune, differs only in that it is a bit faster and features female, not male, vocals. An excellent single which has also made me a fan of Material Issue. –Rich Cocksedge (Jarama 45RPM)

IMPARCIAL:
***Imaginando Lo Sucedido:* 7" EP**
Mix of punk and nueva canción-inspired folk, with the band deftly dancing between the two. That dance, along with some poetic, meaningful, and well-written lyrics, keeps things interesting throughout, with enough to please both those who like things loud and raucous and, say, your average Billy Bragg or Silvio Rodríguez fan. –Jimmy Alvarado (Del Corazón)

INVISIBLE EYES:
***Searching for Crows:* CD**
According to something I read online, this is envisioned as a mix of U.K. punk and "world music." The standout, "Horreur," is an instrumental track with delayed staccato guitars and a repetitive rhythm that recalls Abecedarians' "Soil." The remainder of the tracks, however, largely seem to lack inspiration and squander some potentially potent riffs with structures a bit too loose for their own good with production that's more demo than finished product. Really wanted to like this, bummed it was just kinda "meh." –Jimmy Alvarado (Invisible Eyes)

JAGGED BAPTIST CLUB:
***Reptile Super Show:* LP**
Right of the bat, the snazzy production and dark undertones on this record had my attention. The more I listened to it the more it felt like a mixtape of songs—with a commonality of influences—to give it cohesion. *Reptile Super Show* is dark, alternative, catchy post-punk, with enough grit and scuff marks to make you want to come back for another listen. These guys have their own vibe going, but there are echoes of Suicide, Soft Kill, FIDLAR, Savages, and the Icarus Line. –Ryan Nichols (Chain Letter)

JOEY CAPE:
***Let Me Know When You Give Up:* CD**
Sad acoustic guitar music that occasionally pupates into a full-blown power ballad, but usually just sounds like the records we used to get at the college radio station thirty years ago that no one would bother to steal. I did enjoy the cover photo. BEST SONG: The cover photo. BEST SONG TITLE: "Before My Heart Attack." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: No English language anagrams can be made from the phrase "Joey Cape." –Rev. Nørb (Fat)

KEGELS, THE: *Blood and Wine:* CDEP
Glad this one made it into my box of goodies. They're a four-piece from San Francisco with solid harmonies and chops to match. The songs are straightforward but played with an earnestness that is admirable. The title track and "Long Way Home" are the pearls in the oyster, but they all shine. Investigate and report back with your findings. –Sean Koepenick (Self-released)

KEVIN K AND THE KRAZY KATS: *Just Say Yes:* 7" EP
Sloppy, '77, Johnny Thunders nodding off, cheap beer, and CBGB's are the words that come to mind when I put this record on. –Ryan Nichols (Red Hawk)

KIDS ON FIRE: *Songs in the Key of Bummer:* CD
These guys have been a band for what feels like forever, but haven't done a lot of physical output. I've seen them play countless times for close to a decade, and now I'm finally hearing these songs (as well as some new ones) the way they were meant to sound. Because sometimes, or most times, what's kicking through a punk bar/house/venue's speakers isn't always the best quality. So now that I'm revisiting songs that I've heard many, many times, I've developed a new appreciation for them. Both of the guitar players share vocal duties, and while each is great, Mikey really has a set of pipes on him. The lion's share of songs is about how to exist through a cloud of booze-fueled anxiety. Or is it anxiety-fueled drinking? A collection of melodic, gritty, honest songs that would fit right at home with a fan of Off With Their Heads. But then they also have a goofy track about a shark gun. –Kayla Greet (Tiny Dragon Music)

KIRA JARI: *Spooky Freaky:* 7"
Alright, you had me a punky power pop from Texas. So, I went back and read my review of their cassette release a couple of years ago and I fully stand by it (in fact, I almost just copied and pasted it in here). This band absolutely rules! Fast and heartfelt, just how I like it. Again, recorded by Jeff Burke at Cool Devices. Keep them coming and I'll pick them up! –Ty Stranglehold (Dirt Cult)

KIRA JARI: *Spooky Freaky:* 7"
Let the Texas highways break you all damn day just to be around Andy's welcoming smile or Avery's infectious laugh. And on the days when getting to Denton just isn't possible, reach for this 7". Millennium DIY punks that have spent years drunkenly staring at their turntables while Marked Men, Tiltwheel, and Bent Outta Shape records spun into the night. Years studying, years cracking the codes. And once the needle hits the groove on *Spooky Freaky*, it's just raining fire of riffs, licks, and love. And for the span of four songs, you feel like you're amongst your kind, and damn it feels good. –Daryl (Dirt Cult)

KNOWSO: *Like a Buzz:* 7"
Two tunes with a bit of quirk in 'em, reminiscent of early '80s stuff that danced the thin line between oddball punk and oddball new wave. They're effective and not so indulgent or navel-gazey that they take more time than's necessary to get their point across. –Jimmy Alvarado (Total Punk)

LADRONES: Self-titled: LP
Boisterous Puerto Rican punk rock steeped in '60s garage rock. They keep a very solid footing in the gray area between "punk" and "hardcore," punctuating throughout with psych and garage grace notes, and drowning the whole in a wash of fuzz and reverb. The result is a snotty, effective mix that'll make you bounce while careening off the nearest wall. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

LBB: *Popped Music:* LP
Sounds like two characters from *Squidbillies* and one from *Star Trek* got together and attempted a heartfelt homage to Lou Reed's *Metal Machine Music*. Sure it's niche, but they've got first-to-market advantage! BEST SONG: Side A. BEST SONG TITLE: Side B. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Thirty-five years ago, this would have been called "industrial" music, before "industrial" meant what it means today, whatever that is. –Rev. Nørb (Iron Lung)

LILLINGTONS, THE: *Death by Television:* LP
From the moment I first heard this record in my early twenties (some time around '04-'05) to the umpteenth time I've heard it over the last fifteen years, it still cuts. The punch they packed in 1999 is still just as strong as the Flavor Aid at Jonestown. I fucking love Kody's voice, and it fits in great over a smattering of sharp leads and a pummeling rhythm section. This is the kind of melody-laden punk that really pumps me up—Ramones inspired, not Ramones derivative. It's sing-songy with a snarl. I'm stoked that this pop punk classic got such a rad repress. Some people say that picture discs don't sound nearly as good as black vinyl, but from where I stand, this version rips just as hard as what I played in my discman years ago. –Kayla Greet (Red Scare)

LOST PACKAGES: Self-titled: CD
Minimalist, largely synth-driven lo-fi darkwave with a flair for the experimental. –Jimmy Alvarado (Eastern Prawn)

M.A.R.C. AND THE HORSEJERKS: *Hu$bandry:* LP
Oddball self-described "farmcore," this purportedly chronicles the trials of a "reluctant heir to a 'hands on' horse breeding ranch in Witherspoon, Greece." The songs are a mix of some quite accomplished songwriting and performance and gruff vocals with humorous lyrics, which leaves this reviewer with the conundrum of being more amused by the results than he might've been normally. If ye like things well done and weird, this'll do ye solid. –Jimmy Alvarado (Nadine)

MAD PARADE: *Caffeine Scream:* LP
Just when the world seems especially bleak, Mad Parade drops yet another stunner of an album. Essentially a reworking of many of the songs originally on 1994's *Jigsaw Reality*, the production here is much beefier, the track order is reconfigured, and additional cuts are thrown in for

good measure, including an unlisted "hidden" track. Their signature "So Cal punk meets UK82's catchier wing" sound is employed to devastating effect throughout, the big choruses at times recalling the "sugar oi" goodness of Vanilla Muffins, at other times hinting at edgier rock influences. It's a banger, stem to stern, and comes highly recommended. –Jimmy Alvarado (Gutterwail, madparade.biz)

MALCRIA: *El Reino de Lo Falso:* 12" EP
Blown-out and steeped in feedback hardcore punk from Mexico City. They blend elements of Discharge with crustcore with present-day Japanese hardcore with Scandinavian brutality for their own sonically destructive means. Malcria display their intensity not so much in speed, which is there, but with a relentless approach to everything. Even their mid-tempo breaks have a boiling energy that's ready to blow at the slightest provocation. They are also unbelievably catchy at times ("Si Es Fácil No Vale," and the title track are good examples), which is a testament to their ability to knock you on your ass while ensuring these songs burrow in to your mind. –Matt Average (Iron Lung)

MANLIFTINGBANNER / DEADSTOOLPIGEON: Split: 7" EP
Two of my all-time favorite bands on one record! That doesn't happen too often, and okay, it's essentially the same band, just with some personnel changes (MLB was first, and had Paul and Olav from Seein' Red in the line up, and DSP formed after MLB split, and with a different drummer). That doesn't diminish the crushing music both bands mete out. On this record each band covers two songs from classic hardcore bands from the days of yore; MLB cover SSD and G.B.H, and DSP cover Alone In A Crowd, and Underdog. The DSP renditions are scorching! Their version of Underdog's "True Blue" is a head turner. There's more punch in the rhythm, and Michiel's voice is great. That snarl is confident and soaked in attitude. –Matt Average (Refuse)

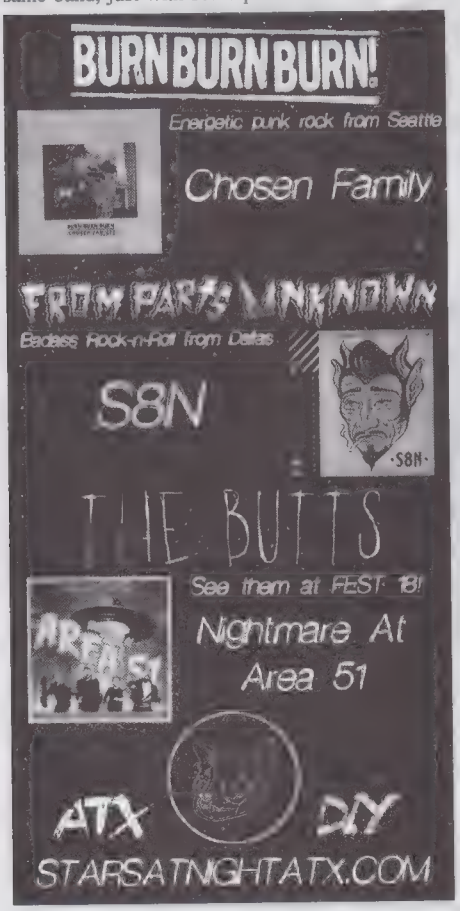
MARTHA: *Love Keeps Kicking:* LP/CD
Confession: I've been casually following Martha since the very beginning, but my favorite song of theirs is and always has been the first song of their first EP. There's been tons of great stuff since then, but at this point I don't think anything else is ever going to hit me as hard as that one perfect, jangly, Audre Lorde-centric powerpop anthem does. This is just a bittersweet personal truth that I have had to learn to live with. That being said, *Love Keeps Kicking* RIPS. I don't know how they keep turning out these sparkling fucking hits, but here they are about a million releases deep, just as jubilant, hyperliterate, and stupidly catchy as ever. Highlights include the prechorus of "Into This," which The Smiths wish they wrote, the Lovecraftian horror that just bursts out of nowhere in "The Void," the sweetly self-referential "Lucy Shone a Light on You," the fiercely buoyant title track… Honestly, I tried to keep track of my favorite songs as I listened to this all the way through for the first time and I just wrote down almost every title. I spent the last seven years thinking this band might have peaked right out the gate, but this might be the record that makes me revisit that assumption. –Indiana Laub (Dirtnap / Big Scary Monsters)

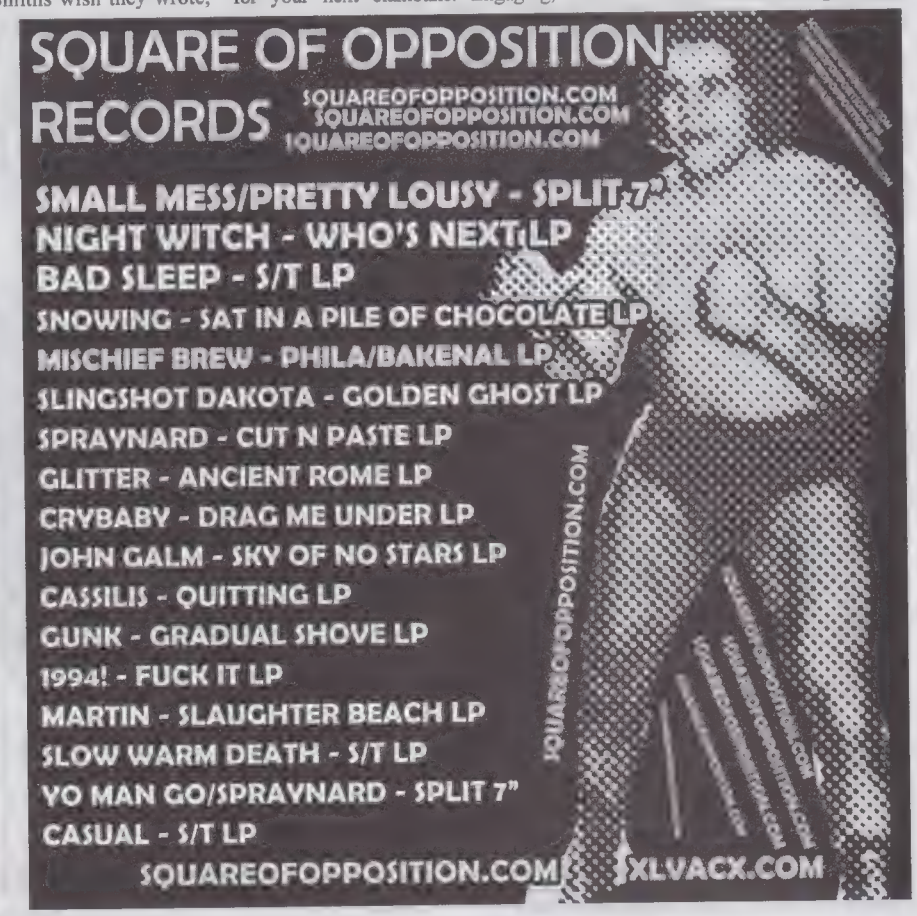
MIND TRAP: *Life Among Liars and Thieves:* 7"
Gruff hardcore of that early turn-of-the-century caliber but with anti-social lyrics of the SSD variety. Definitely on par with 86 Mentality, Think I Care, and all those degenerates but these cats are from Berlin, have played in other notable bands (Highscore, Short Fuse, Vitamin X), and this record was originally released in 2015. Time notwithstanding, I can still appreciate the sour attitude and nihilism expressed herein. Now I've got to shave my head and fetch my jackboots and flannel! –Juan Espinosa (Refuse)

MODEL ZERO: Self-titled: LP
Members of Aquarian Blood, Ex-Cult, and The Sheiks go retro in a different direction here. Incorporating what sounds like ancient synth tech, guitars, and a yen for groovy '70s rock, they end up with some lo-fi dance-via-Suicide for your next clambake. Engaging, fun, and infinitely listenable. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

MORAL PANIC: Self-titled: LP
Let this stand as a testament to those who might've thought their corker of a debut was a fluke: it's wasn't. Ten more tracks of high-octane punk with lineage hearkening back both to Midwest hardcore and L.A.-via-Arizona legends The Consumers, all saturated in pummel and wail, grime and groove. Nineteen minutes later you're left dazed 'n' wondering just what ran you over and hoping it'll pass this way again to do the same. –Jimmy Alvarado (Alien Snatch)

MOSKWA: *Nigdy:* LP
I'd venture a guess this Polish trio was really into G.B.H and Discharge in 1986. This LP contains the band's 1986 demo *Nigdy!* ("never" translated into English). The LP looks great and the album comes with a precious booklet with some press clips and such (untranslated) and lyrics and memories (translated). One thing apparent from the booklet is at some point they had one big photo shoot. There are loads of great pictures of them hanging around with big hair in desolate areas of Poland. They look like they were having some Beatle-esque laughs that day. I'm not making fun; it's just odd to think of a band getting this amped for photos taken in preparation for a demo. They probably had a friend into photography. It's too bad they didn't have a friend into recording, 'cause





the songs are awesome, but the levels are terrible. You really have to turn it up to hear what's going on. But it's worth the effort. This record wrecks at a furious pace with loads of tortured minor chords, tight choruses, and d-beats. The lyrics are a wonderful mash of things bands yelled in the '80s. "The fate of the world is undecided/ the black date is getting closer/ we're strong, rough, ready, prepared, for the last journey to death." That's all the lyrics to a whole song. "Masturbacja" is a frank rumination on masturbation I don't fully understand, but I think it's important to talk openly about these things, so it's good as a conversation starter. You have to really pay attention to this to get a lot out of it, but I found it time well spent. –Billups Allen (Warsaw Pact)

MUSCLEGOOSE:
***A Hot Dog Made of Us:* 7" EP**
I figured it was only a matter of time before the aura of dark frustration permeating this nation's mucus membranes and the ready availability of commercial-grade marijuana to the youth collided to synthesize a resurgence in goof-core: People are screaming their lungs out at top speed to alleviate the pressure of living through this idiotic period of history, while simultaneously singing about ridiculous shit like ABBA™, Elvis Costello, and Mr. Pibb® so as not to reaggravate the PTSD this idiotic period of history has brought about. I declare this record beneficial to society at large and probably at least as good as Public Humiliation were. BEST SONG: "Mr. Pibb Goes to Washington." BEST SONG TITLE: "ABBA & Elvis Costello Meet Ben Stein's Mummy." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Cool teens love it! Nude Kelsey Grammer hates it!" –Rev. Nørb (Also Tapered)

MUTANT LOVE / THE YELLNATS: Split: CS
Mutant Love is a great band from Texas, and I'm fucking stoked they finally released something! This is good in a Tiltwheel kind of way—catchy as fuck with gruff vocals, the bummerish lyrical content carefully intertwining the melodies throughout. I'm super into Mutant Love. The Yellnats contribute two songs themselves, landing more in the traditional No Idea Records vein, singing songs about being young and living in a small town. There's a lot on this release to like, with Mutant Love being the standout. –Mark Twistworthy (Motorcycle Potluck)

MYSTERY GIRL: *"Heart Breaker" b/w "Salted Slug":* 7"
This 7" single delivers two authentic, 1977-infused glam tracks from Albany, New York's stellar Mystery Girl. The production is grand, and both songs are instant grabbers. In two years or so as a band, Mystery Girl has put out a handful of singles and EPs, but it's clearly time for a full-length. I fucked up and missed them when they toured recently, but I think this is the record that was released in conjunction with that outing. Power pop power forever! –Art Ettinger (Brain Slash)

NATIONS ON FIRE: *Burn Again…:* 12" EP
I remember the day a box of the double 7" version of this came into Epicenter in San Francisco. Summer of 1993. I was already a fan of these guys after hearing their album *Strike the Match*, but this EP upped the ante considerably. I grabbed a copy out of the stack and put it on the turntable. The hair on my arms stood on end and my mouth was agape as I stared at the record spinning around. "On and On" was ripping out of the speakers with wild abandon and I knew I was hearing a great record. (That song became the song of the summer for some friends and me.) These eight songs are very much hardcore punk, but they pushed against the boundaries. Nations On Fire were considered a straight edge band, but they were too smart for that crowd, as were most of the European bands in that genre at the time. They took their clean living beyond just high school concerns and brought it into perspective on a political and social level. They attacked patriotism, nationalism, racism, destruction of the environment, and other problems of the modern world, and they did it with great music to get the message across. Think of No For An Answer mixed with late-'80s, early-'90s Dischord Records bands. Blazing, tuneful, and smart. Over twenty years later, and this record is still relevant. –Matt Average (Refuse)

NEGATIVE VIBES: *Broken Mind:* CD
Heavy, blasting rock'n'roll. It straddles the line between all manners of heavier-sounding '80s-inspired punk music. It's so all over the map; it's hard to pin down what I actually want to talk about. At its best, this record is like a fun '80s punk compilation. You never quite know what you'll get on the next track. –Gwen Static (TNT Tunes)

NOTS: *3:* LP
A strong set of songs here that deftly mix post-punk and quasi-simplistic angularity with punk heft. At times they pull the hat trick of simultaneously recalling Dead Kennedys, Flipper, LiLiPUT and later period Middle Class, with swirling synth added as grace-noise. Moody, dissonant, and more sophisticated than it lets on, this definitely hits the spot. –Jimmy Alvarado (Goner)

NUEVOS BAJOS, LOS: *Gema:* 7"
The title track is, at its core, a ranchera with a bit of roots and punk slathered on for interesting added texture. The flip, "Cien Años," is an electrified, punkified bolero with horns. Both work well on their own terms, managing to be loud and "modern" without losing center. Thumbs up. –Jimmy Alvarado (Del Corazón)

OBEDIENCE: *MMXIX:* LP
Texas thrash from members of Tear It Up, Signal Lost, Concrete Elite, Breakout, J Church, and Severed Head Of State. Tempos are up to a good gallop

without veering into silly-fast territory, the metal is thankfully nonexistent, and they whoop it up in fine fashion. –Jimmy Alvarado (Fair Warning)

ONE WAY SYSTEM: *All Systems Go:* LP
I remember dismissing this album out of hand when my younger brother bought it from Roadhouse Records not too long after it was released—too many of the songs were "too slow" to the then-teen me snobbily grooving on too much Void and Neos—and never gave it another backward glance. Funny thing, time. What I thought was "crap" then turns out to be pretty spot-on UK82 punk fodder to these ears nearly four decades later. There are some thrashers to be found, but the slower tunes pack much heft and an odd sense of melodicism lost on me that first time 'round. Thank Mahfü this (now old) kid can change his mind. Thumbs up. –Jimmy Alvarado (PHR)

OORT SMOG: *Smeared Pulse Transfers:* LP
Wow! Breathtaking sax 'n' drums blasts played with punk rock energy and math-y riffs. I like it best when the sax is working through different variations on the same figure while the drums take off, in conversation with the melody. This isn't free jazz, it's surprisingly structured and listenable for something with so much forward motion, and midway through Side 2, I caught myself playing air sax with one hand and air drumming with the other while chewing a sandwich. <Mike Watt voice> These hoots and saxophonations jam forward and celestialate through the brain pan with whacks, thuds, and ecstatic blurts. –Chris Terry (Self-released, oortsmog.bandcamp.com)

OPEN WOUNDS: *Invaders:* LP
This Amsterdam band, featuring members of Vitamin X, plays semi-melodic '80s-style skatecore with no risks taken, unless writing a song about being addicted to record collecting counts as candor. If you're gonna play throwback hardcore—especially as a grown-ass adult in 2019—you either need to play like you've got some steam to blow off, or deliver the jams with a wink to let everyone in on the fun. That's not happening here. –Chris Terry (Refuse)

OTHER HORRIBLE ANIMALS: Self-titled: 10"
Other Horrible Animals are a Texas-based post-punk/noise rock band that incorporate elements of DC area punk/hardcore, early '90s emo, and post-hardcore into what they're doing to create a sound that is thick and heavy, with every note seemingly played with a specific intent. Riff-based songs that are sometimes driving and sometimes more subdued and rhythmic, where the notes that aren't reached and the guitar strings that aren't hit are often just as important as the ones that are, with utmost attention played to open space, letting these songs breathe. Textures and "groove" (for lack of a better term) are not lost here, as this 10" has six songs of well-crafted, discordant songs with enough non-cheesy "groove"-based hooks to really grab my attention. Absolutely recommended. –Mark Twistworthy (1407)

OUTCASTS, THE: *Self Conscious Over You:* LP
Northern Ireland is famous for Stiff Little Fingers and the Undertones but Ulster and Belfast in particular spawned an entire sound in the late '70s with bands like Rudi, Ruefrex, and the Outcasts making noises specific to the area and also made in the middle of a warzone. The Harp Bar in central Belfast was a haven away from sectarianism and violence in Belfast in the late-'70s where Protestants and Catholics could freely mingle and pogo to the new sounds (go dig into the politics of Northern Ireland if you get a second). The Outcasts did a handful of singles and a couple of LPs, but this, their debut, is an absolute masterpiece. Sing-a-long power pop at it absolute best. I have listened to this LP to death over the past thirty years and it sounds as fresh today as it did back then. There may have been a bootleg of the original a few years ago and all the songs float around on various compilations and the internet, but this appears to be a legit reissue. Put a gun to my head and let me leave with a handful of records; this fucker (my original) is coming. I can even fuck with the sax solo. Wonderful. –Tim Brooks (PHR)

OX4: *No Good:* CD-R EP
Post-punk from Israel. The staccato "popcorn" guitar and the overall vibe recalls Los Angeles' legendary Abecedarians, with maybe a bit more upbeat pop sensibility to the songwriting itself. Nice work.
–Jimmy Alvarado (OX4)

PARADISE: *I Wanna Behave: 7"* EP
We live in an era when instant gratification rules the roost. We want our food prepared for us, our computers to boot up instantly, our lovers a swipe away, and we want it all *now* with no wait. Likewise with music—if we aren't bombarded with catchy hooks within seconds, we're out the door and looking elsewhere. It seems Paradise are aware of our short attention spans and have opted to thin the herd by starting the title track with forty-five seconds of a single churning guitar chord, followed up by a relatively rote punk riff, before delivering up the tasty core of a sludgy but sweet pop jam. Similarly, on "Contagious," the first minute or so leans heavily on grunge riffing before a glimmer of pop appears, and another full minute after that before the vocals kick in... thirty seconds before the song ends. When they eventually pop up, those pop moments, along with the whole of the other two songs here, are a perfect distillation of Hard-Ons heft and Teenage Fanclub saccharine brilliance, smudged and sludged in the best of ways. Much thanks for the reminder that sometimes waiting is worth the effort. –Jimmy Alvarado (Debt Offensive)

PARDON US: *Wait:* LP/CD
It's been some time coming, but Pardon Us has made the wait worthwhile as it

finally unleashes its first long format release. There is so much to enjoy on *Wait* that it's hard to know where to start. The guitar is sharp and edgy, the rhythm section is expansive yet neat, and the songs are blessed with some great socially and politically directed lyrics. It's a refreshingly loose sound which provides a punchy accompaniment reminiscent of some of the politically charged bands like Stiff Little Fingers but also has an early Billy Bragg quality at times. Amongst the numerous standout tracks, my favorite is "It's a Phil Ochs Kind of Day"—the title referring to the American protest singer/songwriter of the 1960s and 1970s—with the song questioning the benefit of fighting wrongs when often nothing can realistically be achieved. However, there remains a sense of determination to continue the struggle against oppression and that is the over-riding message I take from the song. It's not all anger and fist shaking though, as the final track, "We Aren't the Champions," displays a keen sense of humor plus a massive dose of self-deprecation, which puts a smile on my face and is a fine way to close the album. One of the best records I've heard this year. –Rich Cocksedge (Everything Sucks / Johann's Face)

PASHA &&& THE KINDRED SPIRITS: *Demo 2019:* CS
Earnest poppiness wedded—probably unintentionally—to a mildly shambolic noisiness. Sometimes it sounds like they might have Guitar Wolf tied up in the basement, sometimes it sounds like they're trying to figure out how Thin Lizzy did their leads, but at all times it's a sort of massive, unstoppable, irregular, unbeautiful pop boulder, slowly rolling from point A to point B, squishing grass and small lizards as it obliviously rumbles on. I am vaguely intrigued. BEST SONG: "Sweatin' Out." BEST SONG TITLE: "Oregon," I had them in my bracket this year. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Are cassettes supposed to have really shitty graphics nowadays? Is that part of the thing? I ask because this lyric sheet appears printed at 72 dpi. –Rev. Nørb (Self-released)

PAT TODD & THE RANKOUTSIDERS: *The Past Came Callin':* CD
Pat Todd has been pumping out raucous garage rock for like thirty-five years or something with The Lazy Cowgirls and more recently with the Rankoutsiders. At this point, you probably know what you're going to get when you throw on any new Pat Todd record for the first time, and you know it's going to contain all of the staples of any Pat Todd release: catchy, guitar-driven garage rock, often landing more on the "rock" side of the fence than what you're comfortable with. As one would expect, this is a predictably solid release. –Mark Twistworthy (Hound Gawd)

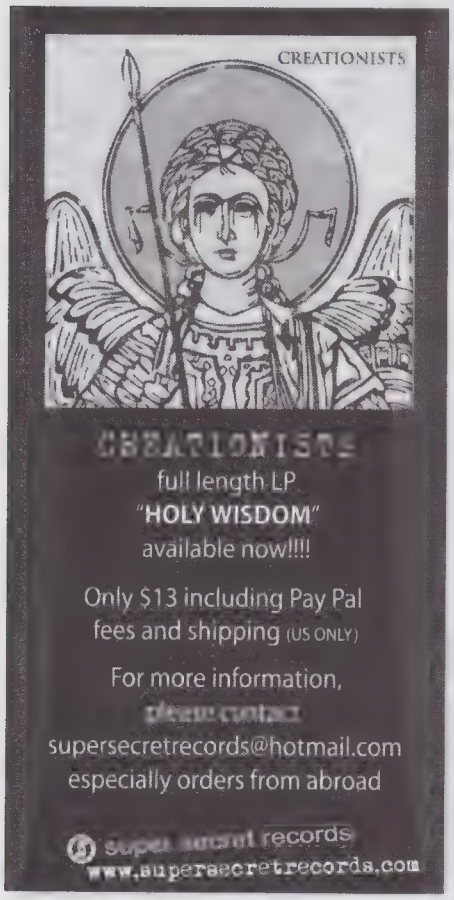
PETTY LARCENISTS: *Stolen Chords and Lifted Riffs:* LP
Petty Larcenists is Jesse Thorson's (Pretty Boy Thorson & The Falling Angels, The Slow Death) latest thing. This is a mix of solid, Americana song-structured, working class-sounding power pop and punk-inspired rock songs, light on the heartstrings, heavy on the despair. It's slick and has production to really bring out the power pop qualities, with monster riffs whisping around serious guitar swagger along with Jesse's catchy/gruff vocals over the top. I was happy to see this in my review stack after seeing their set at Awesome Fest earlier this year, and it doesn't disappoint. –Mark Twistworthy (Rad Girlfriend)

PLEASURE LEFTISTS: *The Gate:* LP
Songs of loss and longing by immobile alien giants composed of the sheerest crystal, marooned separately at our planet's poles, and tragically forced to communicate via telepathically influencing the music of the spheres, the songs of the humpback whales, and radio broadcasts of old Skids and U2 songs. So, not all that bad, really. BEST SONG: "Phenomenon." BEST SONG TITLE: Not "Dancing in the Dark." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The inside of the record sleeve is brown and picky. I've really never liked that. –Rev. Nørb (Feel It)

PRIMITIVE HANDS: *Bad Men in the Grave:* LP
Mix of garage and roots rock that at varying times has echoes of Neil Young, the Velvet Underground's more "rock" moments, and a countrified Love amidst the mid-fi stomping. The whole works surprisingly well, and the decision not to drown things in a stereotypical wall-of-shit sound was a wise one. –Jimmy Alvarado (Alien Snatch)

PRIMITIVE TEETH: Self-titled EP: CS
I love all this dark-edged stuff coming out of Chicago. It's urgent and just loose enough to feel like it can bring you solace, even when Christine Wolf is lamenting a nagging sense that you made a wrong decision somewhere back there or that someone you knew once is now a complete stranger. Some of the songs have some more basic, classic punk-inspired riffs which work fine and do the trick. But these folks really shine on tracks like "Hands and Eyes" where the post-punk really comes out, both slightly dissonant and symphonic where the depth of Wolf's range is on full display. That song is who the young me who loved Veruca Salt has grown into. –Theresa W. (Self-released)

PROTESTER: *The First Two Years:* LP
Burly hardcore from DC that sounds like they're from the golden era of Boston—more Negative FX than Minor Threat. These guys crank it out with an undeniable fury where tempos switch back and forth, and the tension is relentless, losing no steam as they sail into a breakdown before ratcheting it up again for one more blast. This album collects their 2013 demo, a promo tape, their debut EP, and their song from *The Red Line* cassette comp. Some crushing stuff on here. –Matt Average (Refuse)



PROTESTERA: *Kampen Går Vidare:* CD
Moody, dramatic crust stuff that reminds me quite a bit of Antiproduct or Adelit@s, even though Protestera hails from Sweden. Lots of call-and-response male/female vocals, charmingly cruddy-sounding guitars, and radical politics. If you're into stencil fonts and circle As in your artwork, and calls for revolution and direct action in your lyrics, you could do worse. Were it still around, Profane Existence would have distroed the hell out of this thing. –Keith Rosson (Halvfabrikat)

PSCIENCE: *Untitled:* LP
There's always been something about the South. There's a vein that runs through Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana et al. of fucked-up punk aliens. Pscience share members with Buck Biloxi, Black Abba, and a number of other fucked-up no-marks. It's like the Lost Sounds mating with old school '70s new wave. Go look up the Red Squares or Métal Urbain. Femme-driven psychosis. Deranged as fuck. Drug music. If you ever fucked with Jay Reatard or Total Punk Records, I would suggest getting involved in this. It's weird as fuck and the jams burrow into your brain. I got the curtains shut, psychedelics on deck, and we are going in. Mandatory. See you in space. –Tim Brooks (Space Taker)

PUNCH DRUNK: *Sassy:* CS/CD
Although the bands used to describe Punch Drunk's sound include Hot Water Music, Hüsker Dü, and Jawbreaker I am adding The Doughboys, All Systems Go!, and Red Collar to the list. In fact, the first two— obviously connected groups—of those three latter bands were my first ports of call when considering comparisons to Punch Drunk. There are some really strong songs here and the highs are much more prevalent than the few lows. Although on a further plus side, having played this quite a few times now, even some of those lows are beginning to sit nicely in my head. An impressive debut. –Rich Cocksedge (Disillusioned / Engineer / Just Say No To Government Music)

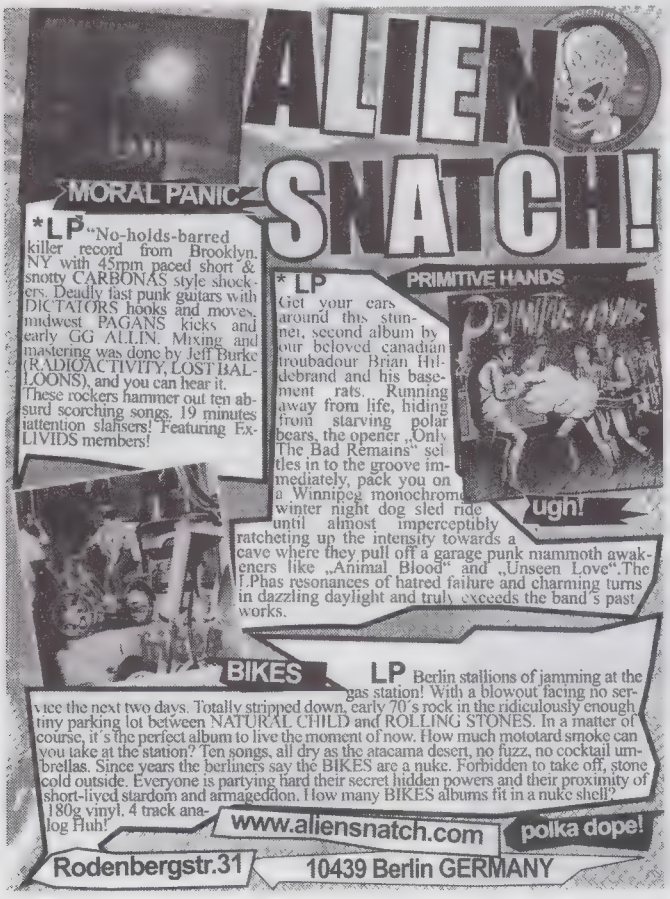
QUITMAN: *Why Don't You Love Me?:* CS
Is the musical term "weird punk" still being thrown around this far into the twenty-first century? That is what this would fall under if that is the case. Real Terminal Boredom vibes and fans of In The Red Records back catalog would likely find a whole lot to like here. Noisy, lo-fi, a little psych in places—you know the sound by now I would imagine. –Mike Frame (Feral Kid)

RAMOMS: *Problem Child:* 7" EP
First song is a reimagining of "Judy Is a Punk" with Philadelphia legend Gritty as the main character and I am convinced. These four badass Philly women have taken the Ramones and made them into something even more fun. It's beyond an homage—it's a distillation of everything that is fun and uplifting about the Ramones without any of the baggage of punk credibility. The Ramoms are pure fun and delight. *Problem Child* is well-executed with a perfect balance of sandy vocals and tight playing. Three songs, six minutes. It'll convince you to enjoy summer the way you did before you took yourself so seriously. –Theresa W. (Pirates Press)

RAMONA: *DEALS, DEALS, DEALS!:* CD
Three years since their EP *Sad Brunch*, Ramona hits us with a proper full length. Every time I see them play I just think, "This is the best band." Their song titles are choice: "Panama by Van Halen," "Shit, We Broke Up," "Hater's Ball Parade." Always a good indicator that the lyrical content is gonna be solid. They pull no punches, they inspire emotion, they are acutely self-aware and intentional. Each song has a clarity to the vocals that really cuts through their anthemic builds in a big way. The drums sound so full, yet not overpowering. The bass strikes a sweet balance between rhythm and melody, while the guitar brightly shines just underneath the vocals which are front and center. Songs are about love and avoiding it, self acceptance, tokenism, and introspection. I just can't get enough of the dance they do with vulnerability and strength. "Are We Having Fun Yet?" talks about the fear of letting someone in and being used instead of supported. They ask "Can you deal with me when I'm just ok / be with me when I'm just ok / what the fuck's the point of only being ok?" It's a thoughtful "what if" scenario that plagues anyone in any relationship, especially those prone to overanalyzing everything. But it's "Getting There" that crushes me every time. I always want to be the loudest in the room when singing along to this one and don't care how badly my voice might crack. It's such a raw look at how depression shapes our minds and ability to socialize. Because—as they shout through the speakers—we're only as stable as our last breakdown. Ramona is the spiritual and musical medium that we all need in this world. –Kayla Greet (Red Scare)

RASHOMON: *Pathogen X:* 12"
This DC band plays like someone fired a starter pistol in the air and they all started charging forward as hard as they could, trying to rock their way to the finish line. It's that urgent, desperate sloppiness that Void had, seen through a murky crust punk lens (with well-placed guitar shredding, I might add). These songs have been making the rounds online for a few months, and it's rad to have them captured on wax. It's a cool record, too: six songs on one side, etching on the other, and a mysterious-looking cover that gives the band a little extra mystique. They hardly need it. –Chris Terry (Iron Lung)

RAT FANCY: *Stay Cool:* LP
A totally welcome Juliana Hatfield/ Rose Melberg vibe from these L.A. dreamers. Maybe even some Paisley Underground and maybe even everything else you want from indie pop: fuzz, feelings, sugar, beaches,



messy rooms, good times, bad times. The waning moments of summer easing into the jacket weather nights of fall could be the best time to hear this, so be prepared and cue this up. –Matt Werts (HHBTM / Solidarity Club)

RE-ANIMADORES: *Camaro '86:* CS
The cover art gives off generic '80s synthpop throwback vibes, but Re-Animadores are really effortless garage punks. Or, really, despite the references to one era or another (the fonts and fast cars of the '80s, the Nuggets approach of the '60s), their songs are strong enough to sit outside time and genre, and feel like the infinite good time rock' songs are supposed to feel like. –Matt Werts (Burger)

REGRES: *Tu i Teraz:* 7"
Polish hardcore that reminds me of the skate punk/emo/hardcore hybrid scene of the early '00s. Kid Dynamite, Lifetime, and Strike Anywhere seem like decent touch points. It doesn't stick for me, but I can't deny the energy and purpose that this record oozes with. It's an absolutely solid EP, and surprisingly deep into this band's career for an EP this good. Legit. –Gwen Static (Refuse)

RE-VOLTS: *Leeches:* 7"
Decent enough rock/punk from a Bay Area supergroup of sorts. The songs bounce along nicely—mid-tempo, poppy, and are well produced. By the end, however, the results are neither offending to the senses nor particularly memorable.
–Jimmy Alvarado (Pirates Press)

RIFLEMEN, THE: Self-titled: CDEP
Murderfolk music. I spent the entire recording wishing they had a drummer. Jerk move on my part, I know, but it just felt like they should have had a drummer. –Gwen Static (Macrofi / GC / Waste Your Life)

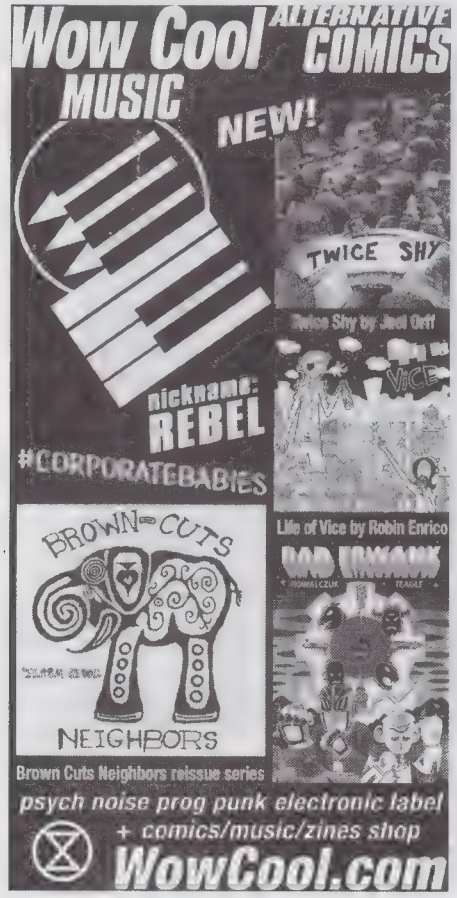
ROYAL HOUNDS: *God Bless the Royal Hounds:* LP
These guys put out a demo last year that brought a lot of attention to them because its members of recently hyped oi bands Criminal and the Brass. The songs here are simple, catchy oi numbers that lean on minor keys, but the guitars here keep things moving and add so much to the sound. The bass is kind of all over the place. Shit, man. This is a really good band. They all play their parts, you know? I don't think that happens a lot on modern punk or oi records, to be just a band of people that knows exactly what they're doing and can concentrate on this line or this passage without having to worry about keeping it together just to finish the song. The bass is constantly moving. The drums patterns are well thought-out and work with the songs instead of just providing a backdrop. This is pretty much essential if you're into oi, but if you are one of the folks that got into oi recently through the hype behind bands like Vanity or Crown Court then this should be your next purchase to further your interest in the style. Fantastic record. –Ian Wise (Oi The Boat)

RUSSIAN GIRLFRIENDS: *In the Parlance of Our Times:* LP
In the Parlance of Our Times hits the floor kicking, screaming, and making a big musical statement with "Coke," a hardcore burst that has the urgency of Circle Jerks as it spews forth for sixty-seven glorious seconds. I was ready for more of the same but the opener was a bit of a curveball as the remainder of the album—whilst undeniably built on punk rock blocks—takes on more of an aggressive rock quality. It took me a few goes to get my head around that sea change but after a while I bought into the more dominant sound. It's full of well-structured songs with interesting guitar interplay, bashed drums, and thought-provoking lyrics which have some great images within them. This is a strong debut that keeps the punches coming from start to finish. –Rich Cocksedge (A-F)

SALTY: *Dry Rub:* CS
It's a "yes" from me, dawg. There's something about this Salty cassette that I can't quite pin down. It's a little creepy with its Gary Numan-esque synths, it's a little dancey with its paradiddlin' drums, and it's inescapably catchy. So basically: *Dry Rub* is one of my favorite new releases of 2019. With clever melodies and masterful songwriting, Salty's definitely a thinking man's band. They sort of remind me of Devo, but they're not stuck operating the way-back machine. Having said that, Salty's cover of Guided By Voices' "Motor Away" is downright gorgeous. It's actually pretty challenging to describe their sound, other than I wholly dig it. It's a safe bet you will, too. You know, unless you hate music and America. –Simone Carter (What's For Breakfast?)

SALVATION ARMY: *Live From Torrance and Beyond:* LP
A crowd recording of a live performance from May 22, 1982 at Wilson Park in Torrance, released in a limited run of 650 for Record Store Day 2019. This recording showcases the band's legendary mix of psychedelia and punk during one of their many peaks, in this case right before they were forced by the real Salvation Army to change their name to The Three O'Clock and they became the flagship of the "Paisley Underground," a name coined by Army leader Michael Quercio. Sound here is nice 'n' clear despite its origin, with a solid performance by the band and some choice (early) Pink Floyd and Byrds covers thrown in with some already on-point originals. –Jimmy Alvarado (Burger)

SANITY CONTROL: *Demo 2019:* CS
Two songs of Polish hardcore/thrash. Think Iron Reagan. Not bad but certainly nothing original here. It's just a demo though, so if some originality and character can be incorporated into future songs, there's no reason this band couldn't tour alongside someone



Late '80s Northern Virginia/DC area punk quartet Indian Summer recorded four songs with J. Robbins producing in Baltimore in 1989. Thirty years later, that four song session plus a demo are available on vinyl.

Indian Summer "Cherry Smash" 12" EP
Limited Edition - Cherry Smash Red (few copies left), Classic Black, and now on Coke Bottle Clear

Out now on Fun With Tape Records
Also available via Dischord Direct and Revelation Records.....Get your vinyl fix!

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like Toxic Holocaust. They've certainly got the chops for it. –Chad Williams (Self-released)

SAVAGE: *No Escape:* LP
Seattle powerviolence with an emphasis on the sludge aspect. It's so noisy and chaotic (in the riffs, not just the recording) that it can make it hard to always know what's going on, but it's definitely worth the repeated listens. They put some actual songs together, which isn't the easiest thing to do in this style. They are on the Weekend Nachos side of things, which I mean as a compliment. Covers of songs by Bold, DYS, and Brotherhood all appear on here, so it's clear they understand how to put together songs that are heavy that are still pretty catchy. Lyrics about racism and imperialism. One song is called "Lion's Pussy," which is about how much they hate our commander-in-chief but has a really dumb name. Just sayin'. –Ian Wise (SPHC)

SCIENCE MAN: Self-titled: LP
More hyperactive than a kiddo chugging soda and Pop Rocks, Science Man blast through eleven mind-melting songs on their debut LP. But who is this "Science Man?" It's multi-instrumentalist/mad genius John Toohill of JOHNS and Alpha Hopper. As Science Man, Toohill channels the guitar-bludgeoning muscularity of Jay Reatard and the rock'n'roll swagger of Sonny Vincent. Right out of the gate, Toohill has written a dizzyingly captivating album that never overstays its welcome and demands repeat listens. Not convinced? Just press play on "Virus" and you'll be begging to be under the tutelage of Science Man. –Sean Arenas (Swimming Faith)

SCOTT YODER: *You'll Never Know:* 7"
I crossed paths with this band while they were playing on the small patio at a women's pinball tournament, but I was not unfamiliar with them. The singer and namesake of said band, Scott Yoder, was the front person of a band I used to see in college called The Pharmacy. It was pleasantly nostalgic to see elements of that group from years ago morphed into new and fresh directions. Their music and look of the band effortlessly blends David Bowie and Adam Ant in a dreamy glam-inspired soundscape with sleepy, airy vocals. It's somewhat goth and gloomy, though the title track starts off with the guitar lead from "Paint It Black," and reprises it after the chorus. It's the closest I'll get to the Stones. While I like what's on it, I have to say this was my first experience with a lathe cut record and I honestly thought my turntable was broken and needed replacing. The grooves on these handmade records are not as deep as those pressed at plants, and as a result I had to weigh down the cassette with quarters until the needle caught the song. They also are quieter than other records, so make sure to play it loud. They're putting out a 7" single every other month, so if you like this, there's five more to grab before the year is out. –Kayla Greet (Spirit Animals)

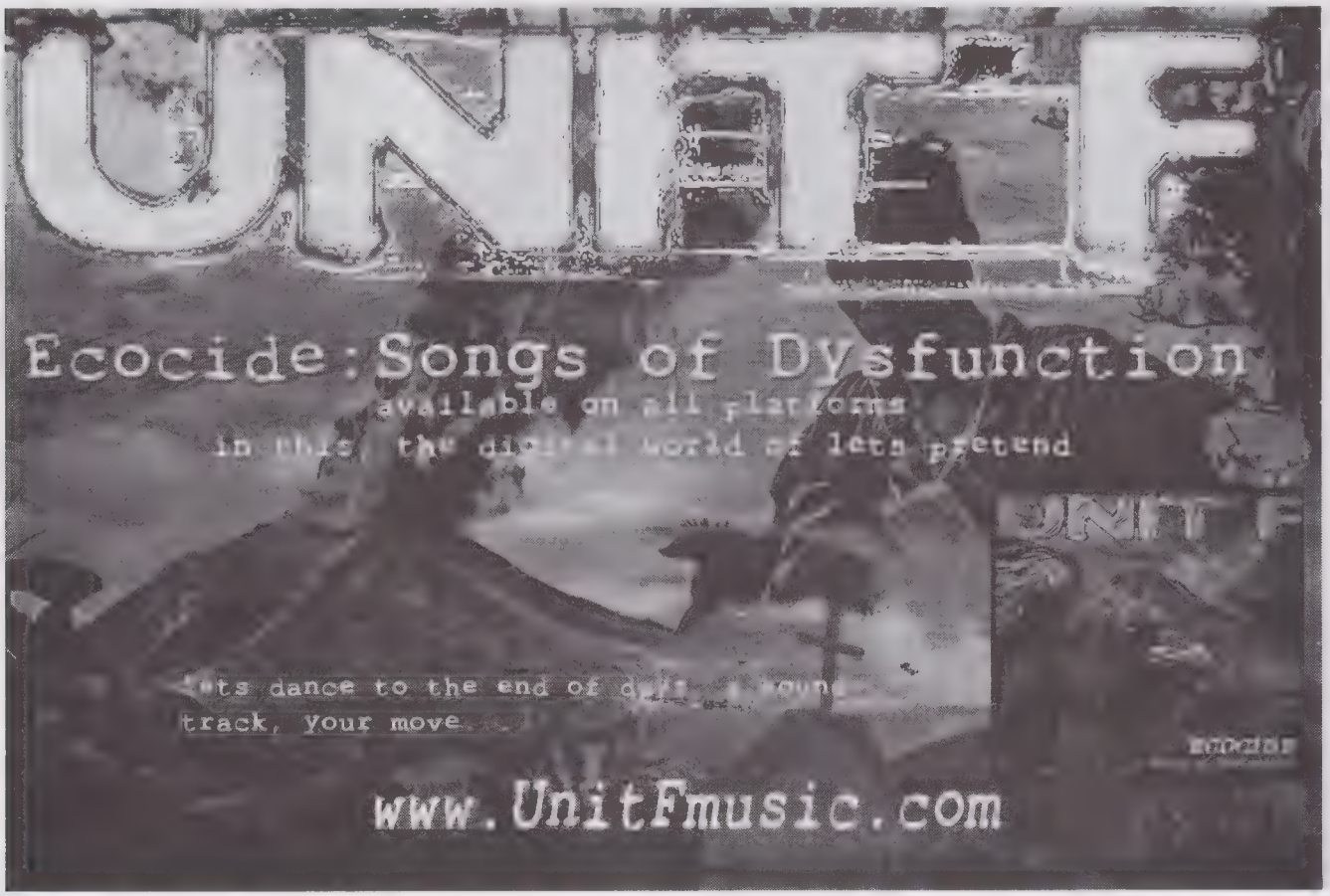
SHIT COFFINS: *Termination:* LP
Members of Talk Is Poison and No Statik churning out raging but still pretty bleak modern USHC. Some of the riffs are actually pretty catchy, there's enough variation between the stomp and the speed to keep things interesting, and there are some perfectly timed guitar flourishes. The recording is nice and full, but still stripped down and rough. The vocals sound like his vocal cords are blowing out hard with every line. Nothing here is progressive or new, but it's perfectly executed and well worth a listen. On the always-reliable Iron Lung Records. –Ian Wise (Iron Lung)

SHOT BAKER: *Crack the Code:* CDEP
They are back! Good to hear new songs from this Chicago band. They have gone down the same path as Night Birds, bringing their ex-guitarist back while keeping their current one in the fold. It serves up a beefier sound on this record. "Give Up" lyric content is isn't exactly cheery, but that is the world we live in now. "Ode to Kerouac" finds singer Tony Kovacs tortured by his love/hate relationship with the author. A cool cover follows and I won't spoil it now for you. The last two songs are more sketches than fully fleshed out ideas. But it is all played with precision and heart, so the effect works for me. –Sean Koepenick (Underground Communiqué)

SIDETRACKED: *Hollowed Out:* LP
Twenty-four blasting tracks that harness the power, intensity, and brevity of old school, West Coast powerviolence. Sidetracked are true believers in the form, never incorporating other elements. There's no "Grim Reaper" nor "Gorilla Masque," just non-stop fast hardcore brutality, start to finish. My favorite track is one called "Tyrant" which contains the single use of the word "tyrant." Lotsa respect for those who can say a lot with actually saying very little. –Daryl (To Live A Lie)

SLACKERS: *Peculiar:* LP
This reissue of 2006's *Peculiar* comes with a bonus 7" of recording session content in addition to all the hepcat goodness of the original release. It's essentially a modern ska classic with a window into the recording process. The original recording was a hybrid live/studio mix, so it's a unique view into a unique exercise. The album is an attempt to capture all the energy of the live show and present it with the polish of a studio record and it does that masterfully. Themes of the lyrics flow effortlessly from personal to political. Songs like "Propaganda" and "International War Criminals" feel reinvigorated in their relevance in the current political zeitgeist. I suspect that this reissue is timed specifically for that to resonate with the lies, cover ups, and hypocrisies of present. –Lorien Lamarr (Pirates Press)

SLOP, THE: Self-titled: LP
The first song blew me away because I thought there was little left to say about Godzilla in music. The song



"Godzilla" was right up my alley being about science fiction and having only three chords in the song. It's aggressive and lays waste, much like the actual Godzilla and the song "Godzilla" by Blue Öyster Cult. "You and Me" has a bit of Reatards melody to it. The whole album is raspy and unravels at the right places, making much use of few chords. It's one of the better things like this I've heard in a while. –Billups Allen (Outro)

SNAKES: *Psychic Rats Demo:* CS
This band is like bizarro crossover:. a world where all the good thrashmetal bands turned into propulsive hardcore bands. It rips in every way you could possibly want it to. They could be this long-lost gem that spent the '80s in a van opening up for Nonmeansno, Die Kreuzen, or DRI, fueling riots at City Gardens and Raul's; but they're a current Los Angeles band that just isn't fucking around at all. Funneling decades of aggressive punk, Stinson-style guitar shit, and metal into a sound that makes you want to slam your head into the computer screen, or maybe that's just me, like literally, right now as I type this. Track this tape down and join the riot. This shit is the real shit. –Daryl (Extinction Burst, extinctionburst.limitedrun.com)

SOUL GLO: *The Nigga in Me Is Me + Untitled I & II:* CD
Soul Glo is a chaotic hardcore band from Philly and most of the people in the band are black. I first heard of them last year when they ran a successful GoFundMe campaign after Missouri cops racially profiled them on tour—pulling them over and arresting one of the band members. The cover of their new album *The Nigga in Me Is Me* is a photo of what must be that terrible day: on a bleak stretch of rural highway, a white cop is watching a young black person in a hoodie standing by a police car's gaping open door as its lights flash and swirl. This record feels like that moment—flailing and screaming through different modes of hardcore, fed up and pissed off, creating something amazing in the face of a world that won't let that be nearly enough. It's the frustrations of black life told through punk rock, and it's Soul Glo's best work yet. Soul Glo's been around for about five years. Trace their trajectory backwards on this CD, which includes all three of the band's 12"s, showing how they evolved from satisfying but by-the-numbers Level Plane-style screamo, through raw-throated hardcore rants, to *The Nigga in Me Is Me,* which builds on the "anything goes" grab-bag of the previous record, weaving chaotic emo, d-beat, powerviolence, and caustic Danny Brown-ish hip-hop into a cohesive statement with tighter playing and a bigger-sounding recording than their previous work. It should be emphasized that the hip-hop in the mix feels completely organic, matching the rest of the music in intensity and adding a welcome dimension. The barcode sticker on top of the CD calls it *The N in Me Is Me,* which is how non-black punks shall refer to this album. While the music is vital, the CD itself is frustratingly bare-bones, with recording info and no lyrics. When a song kicks off with "Them white niggas you fuck with turn tiki torch real quick," I want to know exactly what else is being said! I just ordered the vinyl. Hopefully that format isn't so stingy with the info. Speaking of early '00s screamo, I was active in that scene. As my band was fulfilling dreams by touring Europe and playing venues I'd only seen in zines, I was painfully isolated, trying to work out the nuances of my black identity in that highly white scene. I wish Soul Glo had been around then. I'm glad they're around now and that there seems to be more space in punk these days—more and more bands who aren't just straight white dudes—and that it's leading to exciting and life-affirming music like this. –Chris Terry (SRA)

SPEED BABES: *Pink Tape:* CS
Well, I've just learned never to judge a cassette by its cover. While it looks to me like someone slopped the album art together using Microsoft Paint circa '98, I love everything else about *Pink Tape.* This album by lo-fi garage outfit Speed Babes is satiating my hunger for the perfect crunchy summer tunes. True to their name, each song on this nine-track cassette (plus two more with the download code) hovers around ninety seconds. Plus, I appreciate they recorded all the songs on an iPhone via the Garageband app. That takes balls. Speed Babes sort of sounds to me like a lighter version of Bass Drum Of Death, but far less contrived. So thank you, Speed Babes, for a most excellent listen. –Simone Carter (What's For Breakfast?)

STEVE ADAMYK BAND: *Paradise:* LP
Razorcake's own Steve Adamyk continues kicking ass with this sonic treat of a sixth full-length that demonstrates the fact that the Steve Adamyk Band is unstoppable. Is it brazen to suggest that this might be their best record to date? The polished production doesn't take away at all from the garage-tinged power pop sensibility, instead allowing the catchy songs to flourish without distraction. Phenomenal on all levels, *Paradise* is paradise indeed. –Art Ettinger (Dirtnap)

STRAPS, THE: Self-titled: CD
A reissue of this historied band's debut album, originally released on Cyclops Records in 1982. Although for some reason dubbed a "street punk" band these days, their connections to the crème de la crème of U.K. punk and post-punk—Public Image Ltd., U.K. Subs, Epileptics, Theatre Of Hate, and Sex Gang Children, to name a few—are evident in style variances, their employment of slashy, trebly guitars, and sometimes experimental vocal delivery in lieu of prototypical jackhammer riffs and grumbly vocals. The results

put them more sonically in line with, say, The Skids than Cockney Rejects. Solid release throughout. –Jimmy Alvarado (PHR)

STRUNG OUT:
***Songs of Armor and Devotion:* CD**
Something's evidently clear with Strung Out's output in the last decade: the band has something to prove. One of Fat Wreck's mainstays, they've always been known for "metal tendencies," and while that's technically true (I suppose), it often doesn't tell the whole story. I recall Fat mail order catalogs from twenty plus years ago stating: "These guys spend their time packin' bowls and listening to Pantera." Again, probably true, but while *Another Day in Paradise* and *Suburban Teenage Wasteland Blues* had some ripping guitar parts, they were very much typical (and pinnacle) SoCal skate punk records of the era. What I'm getting at is they're poppy and catchy. The metal thing sounded like more of a mild attribute than a main characteristic. When people refer to skate punk as "pop speedmetal," Strung Out fits this definition like a glove. That's likely more accurate. Now, back to this "something to prove" thing—the metal influences appear to have morphed over the years. The former emphasis seemed to be on almost thrash-like riffs, where now (while those riffs are still there), a lot more melodic guitar leads are both present and constant, almost Maiden-esque. If the group's mission was to let the world know that they're insanely talented, those paying attention have received the message loud and clear. From *transmission.alpha.delta*, to the chances they took on their last (mostly acoustic) EP, this new record almost seems like showing off at this point, but it isn't. Strung Out are just *that* good. This is what they do. Fans have been fans for a reason, and *Songs of Armor and Devotion* (is that a nod to their old hit "Ultimate Devotion"?) shows that off well. –Steve Adamyk (Fat)

SUPERCRUSH: *Collected Crushes Never Let You Drift Away:* LP
Dreamy, whisper-vocal pop for fans of the work of Chris Bell, Bob Mould, or Tony Molina. Flawless and hopeless, nostalgic for a feeling that might only have been imagined in the first place, but the memory is strong and can't be shaken from the cold Canadian nights this band spends huddled around their warm tube amps looking for clues on how to return to this promised emotion. Supercrush, follow the stars and may your riffs grant you the strength to persevere. –Daryl (Debt Offensive)

TANNING BATS:
***On the Assembly Line of Heads:* LP**
Berlin's weirdo punks have unleashed their debut LP, and for those who've never heard them, their sounds fits neatly in between the likes of Uranium Club, Marked Men, and The Oh Sees. From start to finish, this here slab doesn't let you sit still. I'm curious to see how they pull this off live. The sound is everything from unique to catchy to easy going, but it keeps the listener intrigued. Also, it's crucially important not to overlook the eye-popping cover art here. It'd look great as a shirt. Overall, a great debut. –Steve Adamyk (Twintoe)

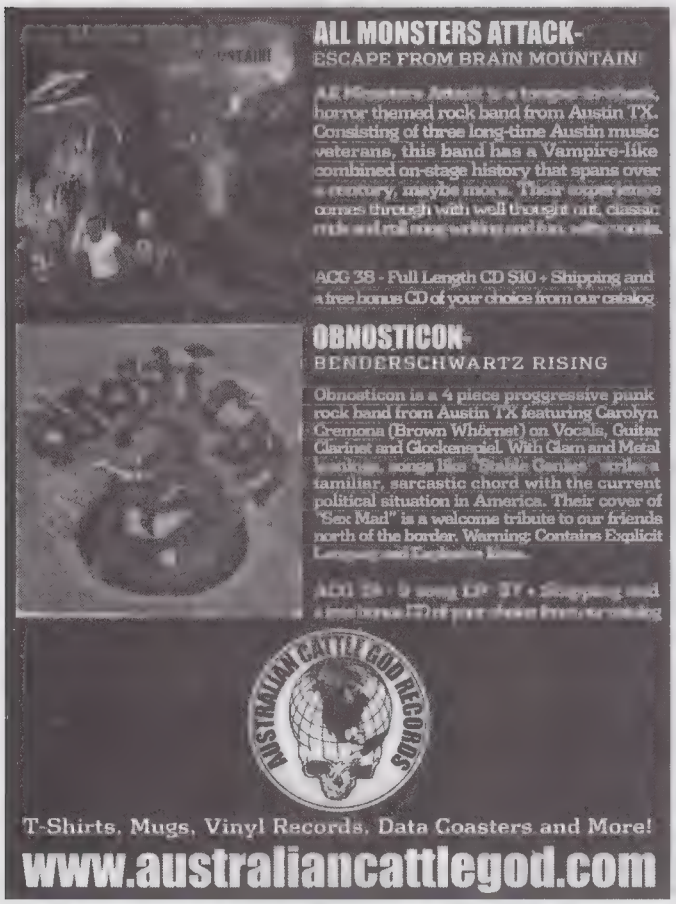
TEENAGE BOTTLEROCKET:
***Stay Rad!:* CD**
This one didn't reinvent the wheel either, so if you already know and don't enjoy the brand of Ramones-core that TBR provides, stay away I guess. Now, for those true punks that stuck around for this review, let me stick it to ya straight. I didn't love the last few Bottlerocket releases, but this is my favorite since *Warning Device*. Yes, I think it's ultimately a stronger album than *They Came From the Shadows*, but I never was a huge fan of the singles on that one. There's nothing in here that will surprise you, but by this point if TBR isn't a warm blanket to return to with every new record, I don't think there's any winning you over. Their strongest in years. –Gwen Static (Fat)

TELEKRIMEN: *Culto a Lo Imbécil:* LP
Trashy garage punk from Mexico with all the usual elements—Farfisa, yell-singing, fucked up (but not at all unlistenable) sound, and familiar song structures—in place, so yeah, nothing new, right? The saving grace is they're quite goddamned good at it, with catchy hooks and a bit more heavy '60s vibe in the mix than is there with too many others plundering this mine. Add a couple of ace instrumentals and you have yourself a winner. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

TIMMY'S ORGANISM:
***Survival of the Fiendish:* LP**
Skuzzy, buzzy garage turbulence from some Michigan mutants who have been laying down the trash for decades in groups like Epileptix, The Clone Defects, and Human Eye. It's a shitstorm of proto-punk swagger and rocker riffs that sustain in the air with such a presence that anytime there's a moment of silence between songs it kinda catches you off guard. There are those who "stay sick," and then there's Timmy, comprende? –Daryl (Burger)

TOMMY AND JUNE: Self-titled: CD
Who are Tommy And June? There isn't much information out there on them. Is this another Spike project? Or even Mike and Eric Melvin themselves? Everything sounds unsurprisingly familiar. Self-proclaimed "Simon & GarPunkel," these ten tracks are all around the two minute mark and over before you blink. Like all Fat content, this isn't anything too serious, lyrically speaking. Which, I should note, is a good thing, considering how boring something like this could be otherwise. It's both upbeat and steadily calm. A real pleasant listen. –Steve Adamyk (Fat)

TOO MANY VOICES:
***Catch Me If You Can:* CDEP**
Following up the excellent *South of Sunrise*, this N.Y. band is back with an



equally thrilling record. The hardcore sound is strong here but they provide enough twists and turns to make the listener sit up and take notice. The one-two punch of "Life on a Sandbar" and "Solitary Man" should be all you need to hear to get hooked. There is also a cover that when I heard it live, it almost made me spill my beer—yes it is that good! The band has now expanded to include a lead vocalist, but for now revel in the sonic goodness nestled inside. –Sean Koepenick (Self-released)

TRASH: *Everything Is TRASH...:* CS
This tape offers a mix of classic powerviolence and tough guy hardcore that sounds like it could have been released thirty years ago. Throaty vocals delivered in "Infest style" makes me instinctively point that direction as a comparison, but musically this is seemingly a little more stereotypically metal influenced than the cream of the crop powerviolence bands. With five songs in eight minutes, this is a good, quick listen. –Mark Twistworthy (Grey Matter Productions)

TV'S DANIEL: Self-titled: 7"
It takes a lot of guts and confidence to name a band after yourself. It's clear from the start that you best have the talent to back it up, lest your own damn name becomes attached to mediocrity. This is something Daniel Fried (aka TV's Daniel) will never have to concern himself with. Just a quick scan down the abundant list of bands he has been or is currently in shows he's got the skills to pay the bills. Musically, the two songs on this debut single do manage to pull some elements from prior projects, but TV's Daniel has its own thing going on. He plays anthemic pop/rock that hasn't been done correctly in almost thirty years, but without all the trappings of the 1980s. I've listened to this record five times in a row and couldn't stop myself from singing along, even if I wanted to. I don't think I've ever name checked The Soft Boys in a record review, but I am now. At the time of this writing, the summer is half over but I am telling you right now this is the jam of the summer. Full album and extensive tour please! –Ty Stranglehold (Wild Honey)

TZN XENNA: *Czart PRLu:* LP
Polish punk progenitors TZN Xenna have been around since the early 1980s, and it shows—in a good way. The band's latest effort, *Czart PRLu*, (don't quiz me on my pronunciation) is true-blue, grade A punk. Played with machinelike precision and sharply produced, this record screams quality without losing any of the band's raw energy. I really dig that all the lyrics are in Polish, save for one small stanza in "Ajdont": "I don't want to see you / I don't want to know / I don't think you love me / Babe, you better go." Indeed; we've all been there, TZN Xenna. Hats off to you, Polish punks, for keeping it real for all these years. *Wymiatasz*, guys. You rock. –Simone Carter (Refuse)

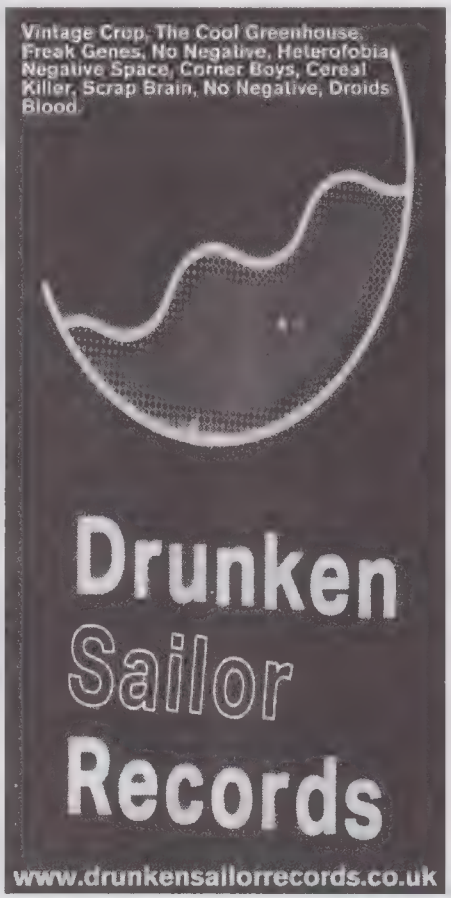
ULICZNY OPRYSZEK: *Fc St. Pauli Do Boju:* 7"
Polish punk that took me forever to spell the title of. I was surprised to hear this record start off in a Face To Face tone, rather than a street punk sound the cover photograph portrayed. There is strong political and national subject matter to these songs, with English subtitles to help folks like me along. Viva polskich punków. –Ryan Nichols (Pasazer)

UNITED X BOMBS: Self-titled: 7"
A little internet sleuthing tells me that the members of U.S. Bombs (other than Duane Peters) have started a new band with the singer of ska band Aggrolites. Here is the debut single. The first song sounds like U.S. Bombs with the exception of having a coherent singer. Interesting, for sure. The flip is a ska track (or is it just a reggae song since it's slow?). Ska is not really my thing. I don't actively hate it but will never go out of my way to listen to it. The song is actually kind of cool, but it is the A-side that is the winner for me here. –Ty Stranglehold (Bomb City Rockers)

USA/MEXICO: *Matamoros:* LP
King Coffey and crew are back with a second helping of oddness for a world that likes their sounds filled with all the proper pre-approved hooks and spoon-fed to them by the corporate masters. Like the first, this is rife with sludgy, blown-out dirges with all sorts of oddness pumped in, all of it howling and snarling like some behemoth laying waste to some major Japanese city. Primo shit from start to finish and a nice "fuck you" to genre-centric thinking. –Jimmy Alvarado (12XU)

VICIOUS CYCLES, THE: *Motorcycho:* LP
I can't recommend this as serious music that means anything at all, but I can recommend it as a flawless one-note party rock record about hot dogs and thrills and weirdos and riding dirt tracks and sort of '50s romance played by people born in the '70s/'80s (I'm guessing?). Thank you to these Canadian punks for reminding me that I do sometimes just want an album of moto-anthems. –Matt Werts (Pirates Press)

WALL BREAKER: *Democracy Dies:* LP
One of those records with cover art that tells you everything you need to know: next to the distorted blackletter type of the album title, a grinning Grim Reaper gleefully shreds the Constitution as halftone tanks roll up on the Capitol in the background. Not a big shocker that what's inside is some supercharged, no-bullshit hardcore punk. The snarling vocals and bass lines are reminding me a little of the first Nerve Agents EP, and I'm also hearing a lot of early youth crew influence in this—the kind that was fast and fun, not the dead-serious jock beatdown soundtracks. "Weather Underground" is a fucking jam. Lyrics take on red-hatted xenophobes and capitalist warmongers, and almost



every song includes the tag "(mosh part)" somewhere around the chorus so you know when to mosh. I'm into that. Nothing new being invented here, but I can't complain. World is fucked. –Indiana Laub (Refuse)

WARBASTARD:
***Blood on Your Hands:* CS**
Crusty thrash outta Wisconsin. The recording and performance are surprisingly clean for the genre, and the vocals are more straightforward pissed than prototypically guttural. They succeed at keeping the metal at bay, the song lengths at reasonable lengths, and the tempos frenetic. Good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (Warbastard)

WARHORSE, THE:
***Bone Apple Tea:* CDEP**
The title track is '80s synthpop with '00s She Wants Revenge-styled vocals. Other songs incorporate thrashy metal and industrial-oriented dance elements while retaining the "pop" before we're treated to a slew of remixes of the original tune. –Jimmy Alvarado (Warhorse)

WASTE: *Last One Standing: 7"*
This record opens with "Not Your Fight," a track challenging all the dude bands who get up on stage and preach about treating women equally, rather than ceding their space, rather than actually stepping back and listening to women. The lyrics specifically call out 7 Seconds, a band that I've seen play "Not Just Boy's Fun" on numerous bills where the only people on stage all night were straight white cis men. To quote Waste: "What are you trying to achieve? You treat me like someone that needs your protection." This is angry, moshy, and absolutely necessary hardcore. –Emma Alice Johnson (Refuse)

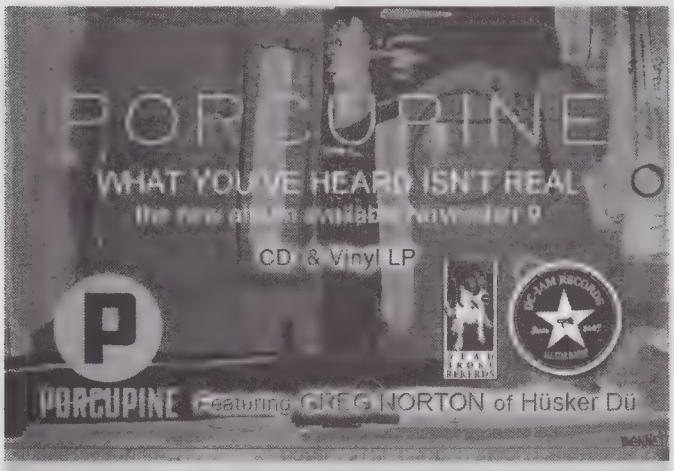
WEIRD NUMBERS:
Minotaur Dreams: 7"
You can take Zache Davis out of Seattle, but you can't take the Seattle out of Zache. I've made some form of this statement before while reviewing Davis' Los Angeles band Maniac. Coming from the Pacific Northwest myself, I witnessed the greatness of his pre-California band The Girls and was sold instantly. With Weird Numbers, we have Zache coming north again to team up with some old friends (and member of The Girls, Tourist, and Wasted USA) and create this beautiful slab of music. Of course, this screams of Seattle in the early aughts to me. How could it not? Five songs of perfectly strange angular pop. Obviously, I can hear The Girls and Maniac in the mix, but there is a level of laid-back urgency that is unique to this band. The first time I put this on, I flipped it over a total of six times in a row. Even now as I revisit it to write this, I am on my third play through. Is it the post apocalyptic surf pop feel that I am hooked on, or is it how fun it is to sing the line "I'm a minotaur driving in my car" over and over? We may never know. I do know that Weird Numbers has found a permanent place in my heart. –Ty Stranglehold (Dirt Cult)

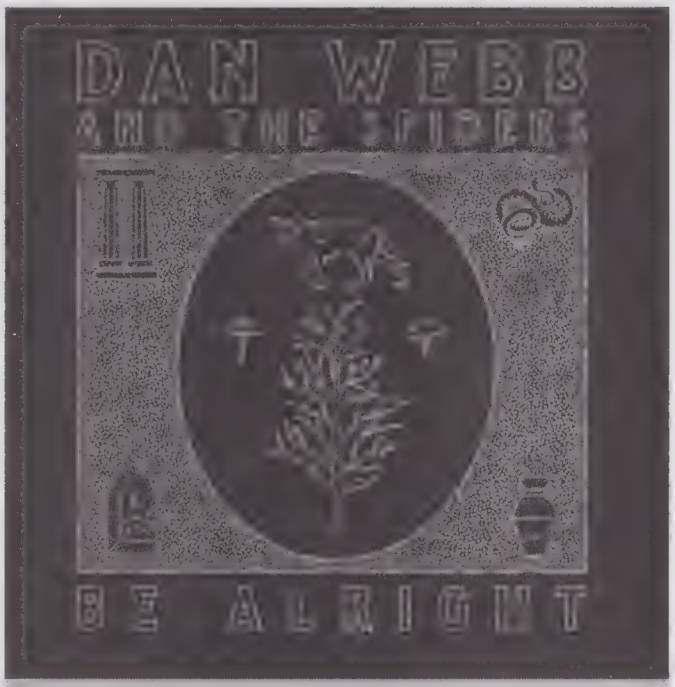
WERECATS:
***Destined for the Outside:* LP/CD**
I procrastinated way too long in buying this album but my recent maiden trip to All Ages Records in London resulted in me finally picking up a copy of Werecats' first long player. Boy oh boy, that was money well spent. This quickly engrained itself in my brain and allowed me to take my air guitar out of its case to wield wildly as a dozen pop punk gems were unleashed on me. With dual female vocals leading the fray and some sweet tuneage driving the songs along, I was an eager convert to the tales of werewolves, dogs, strawberry theft, zombies, and a catmobile! This is such a fun record and it makes me really happy every time I hear it or when—as is occurring frequently—one of the riffs, choruses, or refrains sprouts up out of my subconscious providing a musical surprise. There's an occasional Screeching Weasel vibe running through the album, but from when SW were still good, so you've really gotta love these 'cats! –Rich Cocksedge (Household Name)

WYATT BLAIR:
***Inspirational Strawberries:* CS**
Wyatt Blair (I assume it's a single person and not a band) has a sound like late-era Dave Clark 5 meets the Monkees. I liked it a whole lot. –The Lord Kveldulfr (Burger)

YEAR OF THE FIST: *Revive Me:* CD
Halfway between Sleater-Kinney and The Measure [SA]. Year Of The Fist delivers a full length of mostly mid-tempo punk-tinged rock songs. Listeners might find more in common with X and Joan Jett records than a modern punk act. The record itself is well recorded and the musicians play well together, but the songwriting makes this little more than a fun local act you might see. Not to say that the entire album is full of clunkers. Being charitable, I'd say this record is about half good. This is probably just a matter of taste. The band members seem more interested in riff-oriented '70s guitar rock than I would ever be. –Gwen Static (Hearton,)

ZŁODZIEJE ROWERÓW:
***Demo 1995:* LP**
As a fan of both Fuel and old videos of people in loose-fitting shirts doing the "Fugazi dance" (ask Rene), I thoroughly enjoyed this record. It's melodic Ebullition-style hardcore from '90s Zambrów, Poland. Złodzieje Rowerów were one of the leading '90s Polish hardcore acts before disbanding in 2010. This record is lovingly packaged with a zine-style insert to effectively transport you to another time and place. Plus you can't go wrong with a song openly mocking Pope John Paul II. –Daryl (Refuse)





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BEHIND THE ZINES #8,
$3, 8.5" x 11", copied, 39 pgs.
Billy has put out another solid zine with this issue of *Behind the Zines*. For those who don't know, *Behind the Zines* is, as Billy calls it, "A zine about zines." There are contributions here from all sorts of individuals in the zine community and their pieces vary. There's a self-written Q&A from Neither/Nor Zine distro, a few questions with zinester Julia Eff, and a piece by our very own Todd Taylor titled "One Punk Who Makes Zines." Todd's piece is a good explanation of the history of *Razorcake* and how it operates. But all the writing is good—whether it's an author explaining how he put together his first zine or someone writing how they register people for a zine fest, there's a lot to take in here. If you're part of zine culture, you should certainly check this out. –Kurt Morris (iknowbilly@gmail.com)

BIG TAKEOVER #84, $6, 5½" x 11", glossy, 152 pgs.
Prior to this issue, I didn't know *The Big Takeover* existed, but here it is, with a frankly overwhelming amount of content between interviews, reviews, editorials, and the like. Typically, with a long magazine like this, I'd be bored about halfway through (152 pages of magazine is a lot!), but these folks know their stuff, and they're witty even when rehashing the same debates—as music journalism, particularly in the punk realm, tends to do. The interview with bev davies, a music photographer spanning decades of bands, from the Rolling Stones to D.O.A. to the contemporary Vancouver scene, was a highlight—all this history from one person who not only knows her stuff but was enmeshed enough in the "scenes" to know how it really was. However, the interview is left off halfway through with a note that it'll "continue next issue," which is a magazine peeve of mine—what if I just picked this up and don't have or plan on having a subscription? Either way, lots of good content and lots of good photos for a reasonable price per issue make this a win in my book. –jimmy cooper (bigtakeover.com)

CIRCUMVENTION OF BOB SEGER, THE, 8½"x 11½", copied, 32 pgs.
A wordless emotion piece about the religious conversion of a rock and roll fan. Bob Seger is hell, the Ramones are heaven. This is the kind of punk comic you want sitting on the toilet of a punk house. It's easy to intuit, communicates its premise clearly, and utilizes the comic medium in novel ways. For the most part, this is emotional, metaphorical representations of mundane life and rock music, with little else. If you find yourself a copy of this, it's worth the time it'll take you to read it. –Gwen Static (Jimmy "The Truth" Wysolmierski)

D (N) R / O (N) R (2019 re-issue), $2, 5½" x 8½", 14 pgs.
Aisling Fae states at the beginning of the zine that there is more and more transgender literature written by trans people in English, but not so much in Spanish. That's why she prints all of her stories in English and Spanish. This short story is written from the perspective of a woman who was just brought into the hospital emergency department after a brutal car accident. She can't speak or move, so we read her inner dialogue about what she thinks, sees, and hears from the hospital bed. She overhears the hospital staff misinterpreting one of her tattoos and consequently their decisions on whether or not they should attempt to keep her alive. Despite this dark subject matter, the story is stacked with humor. Our narrator has nicknames for all the staff like "Beardie" and "Whoopi Goldberg." In seven pages, you get a caboodle of horror, comedy, romance, and tragedy. The only thing you could ask for is some artwork in this basic black text on a white paper zine. –Rick V. (Aisling Fae, transfaerie.com)

DEAR JULIE, 5½" x 8½", full-color, copied, 40 pgs.
The comically tragic/chaotic story of a dog left at The Humane Society. To be blunt, in a very technical sense, this was unreadable. *Dear Julie* embraces an MS Paint aesthetic for accomplishing the raw art duties. There are sections where it embraces extreme color, such as a lengthy section in blue and black. I could not make heads or tails of the action occurring on the page. To complicate matters, the overall panel structure was broken and seemingly random. Can't recommend, sorry. –Gwen Static (Martin Phol and Angela Juarez)

DECEIVED, THE, VOL. II, $5, 8½" x 11", color, illustrated, 36 pgs.
It's no secret that the CIA, military, and other federal institutions have performed a lot of awful deeds, starting most obviously with the rampant imperialism and terroristic interference in the name of "democracy" in largely the Middle East and global South. But it's less well-known—that is, not taught, generally, in public schools, often the highest history education a U.S. citizen will get (even at my university—American history is not required), that the CIA has a history of not only colluding with but actively including Nazis (not just neo-Nazis, but O.G. World War II Nazis who worked sometimes directly with Hitler) in "thought control" experiments. TLDR; this zine is about that. It's also about one individual coming to terms with her abuse at the hands of related experiments. Between the poems and drawings of personal abuse and the history included in this zine, it's an uncomfortable read, not, as I did, something to read over your lunch. Trigger warnings abound for sexual, emotional, physical, religious, and military abuse, and it was upsetting to me even as someone who is not a survivor of the level of abuse detailed here. Be cautious, but it is chock-full of good information for those interested in knowing more about the subject, and includes lots of resources, as well as tools for healing, along the way. –jimmy cooper (Sparrow, PO Box 14276, SF, CA 94114)

FUZZ #2, $5 or trade, 5" x 8", printed, 24 pgs.
This second issue of *Fuzz* (Cleveland's underground punk scene zine) features beautiful black and white photography of bands during their live performances, all local to Cleveland. With a short story, an interview with local band DANA, and drawings by local artist Sadie Lee, this follow up to their first zine continues to highlight music, DIY, and the eclectic scene in Cleveland. –Tricia Ramos (Fuzz, 1319 W. 76th St., Cleveland, OH 44102, itsajinx.storenvy.com)

GRATITUDE FANZINE #3, $2, 8½" x11", copied, 14 pgs.
Gratitude's got that now-classic black-and-white cut-and-paste aesthetic while remaining readable and clean, as well as a fantastic cover done by Joe Daly (a comics artist featured on occasion in *Kramers Ergot*). The content is a little light, containing one show review, two interviews (one half a page and one several), a letters section, and a few other short reviews, but what's there is good, worthwhile content. The show review (Fiddlehead, Zeel, Guiding Wave, Glitterer, and Gem at AS220 in Providence) was rad, because it's actually eight reviews of the same show, which made it compelling and a lot more fun than the typical show review. Fanzines—especially those true to the art like *Gratitude*—really never get old, even hardcore fanzines still asking questions about Fugazi. McGuire says it in the "Six Guidelines for Your Fanzine" in this issue: "Even if it's the worst zine of all time," (and this certainly isn't. It was, in fact, more pleasant than most of the hardcore-specific fanzines I've seen) "it's better than 100 percent of the zines that don't get made." –jimmy cooper (AJ McGuire, gratitude.storenvy.com, aj.mcguire00@gmail.com)

HAULING SAND, $?, 5½", x 8½", offset, 26 pgs.
Really nice looking art zine featuring the work of Victor Devlin, mostly abstract-ish ink images and meditative line drawings of foliage. A note on the inside cover says that everything here came from a couple years' worth of sketchbook pages and commissions. The textured cover looks awesome in blue and fluorescent pink. I appreciate the care that clearly went into putting this together, but that's pretty much all I know—the website listed on the cover appears to be dead, so I guess this will always be an enigma. –Indiana Laub (No address listed.)

HOT SHOT, THE, $?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 58 pgs.
The Hot Shot is a short story about two runaways, their life on the streets, loneliness, friendship, and the sickness that comes with methamphetamine. Taken directly from the author's life, this personal and heartbreaking story is well written, describing perfectly their world of homelessness and the struggle to make it on your own. Highlighted is the reality of needing kindness, generosity, and patience from strangers and those we know. Human connection is desperately shown as a necessity—and really a saving grace—when living with drug use and the trauma that comes with it. A heartbreaking first chapter from a larger collection of short stories. –Tricia Ramos (The Hot Shot, 1020 NW 9th Ave. #1112, Portland, OR 97209)

JENNY MAE 'N JERRY WICK, $15, 7" x 10½", copied, 28 pgs.
Personal biography stories about how the writer relates to the two musical artists in question. I'm not terribly familiar with Jenny Mae, but I know Jerry Wick as the songwriter for Gaunt, a pretty underrated punk band, if I do say. The music included is some demo-worthy stuff, but nothing to really be blown away by. I'd argue it's for completists only. The comic is decently put together, as most of the Nix comics tend to be. The sentiment is pleasant enough, but nothing you'll lose your mind over. –Gwen Static (Nix Comics, nixcomics.com)

MINOR LEAGUES #8, $8?, 9½" x 8½", copied, 96 pgs.
In the intro to this third installment of the long-form story *Where?*, Simon Moreton mentions that this issue is way different because it doesn't use any words. This isn't quite true—throughout, images of text messages, book pages, and captions are mixed in with Simon's drawings. What Simon is saying, I think, is that he's consciously stepped away from the sparse dialogue found in the previous two issues. Already, *Minor Leagues* was one of the best zines out there, especially since this long-form story reflecting on the ways that family are tied to geography started. With this issue, Simon has pushed himself even further out there than before. His style of drawing has always glanced rather than stared at its subjects, and here the ephemera introduced through the texts and pages results in an even more feverish dreamscape than before. It's great to see Moreton challenge himself not to repeat previous tricks—even more great because his risks pay off. Seriously, get on board if you're not already: *Minor Leagues* is consistently innovative and rewarding. –Michael T. Fournier (smoo.bigcartel.com)

MINOR LEAGUES #8, £6, 8¼" x 9", 100 pgs.
This issue encompasses part three of an ongoing four-part story called *Where?*. Having not read parts one or two, I was a little worried I wouldn't have any idea what I was looking at, but author Simon Moreton helpfully pointed out in the intro that may very well be the case, even if one had read the other issues, because this one takes on a different format consisting nearly completely of illustrations. There are some photocopied book entries, mostly about the English hamlets, and some text message excerpts, but after a few pages I was able to take off running. This is a memory piece of what I presume are bits of the author's childhood growing up in the English countryside. The drawings are interspersed with some photos and text-based scans every so often, but this is essentially an idyllic, mood-based comic done in a style somewhere between expressionism and cubism with bits of mixed media hinting at a type of narrative collage. This is a breezy read, given its length, and if there's any real criticism on my part, it's that some of the original illustrations seem like they might be well served by better reproductions in color, as they really are quite well done in their minimalist style. –Adrian Salas (Simon Moreton, smoo.bigcartel.com, minor.leagues.zine@gmail.com)

McGuire says, "Even if it's the worst zine of all time, it's better than 100 percent of the zines that don't get made."
–jimmy cooper | GRATITUDE FANZINE #3

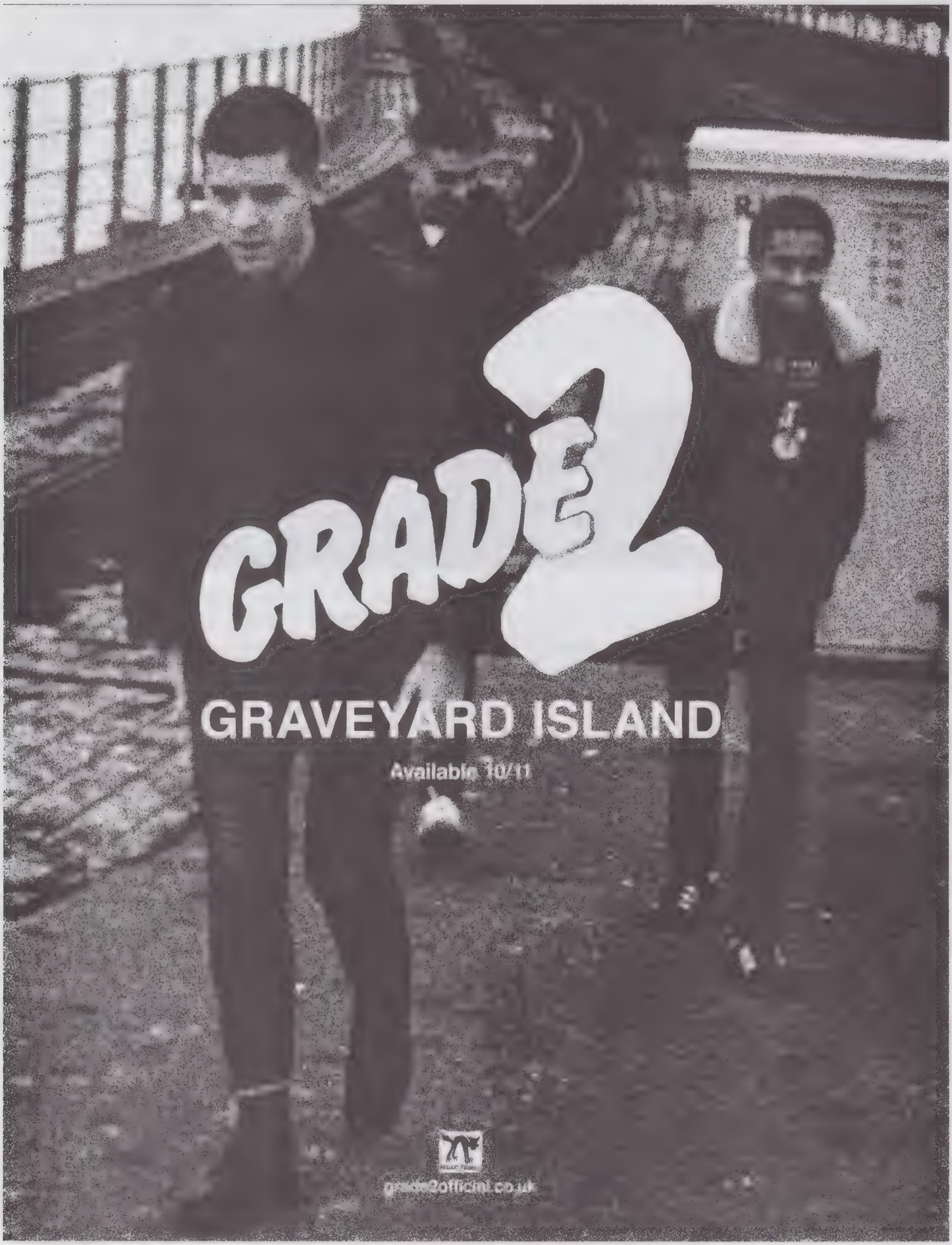
#MCKAYSTORYADAY 2016, $?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 12 pgs.
Founding Slapshot drummer Mark McKay has taken to Instagram to write. It's always nice to come across one of his pieces in the middle of all the show and cat photos in my feed. Here, Mark collects the best of this 2016 Instagram writing into a zine. He shifts from prose to poems throughout, making his work more effective. Both in his feed and in this zine, McKay defies expectations. –Michael T. Fournier (wrkrls.com)

MIDLIFE CRISIS ERA HC, ?, 8½" x 11", offset, 36 pgs.
I was balls-out nutty for hardcore starting in 1981. By 1984, my interest was waning; by 1986, it was completely extinguished. Yet, despite almost thirty-five straight years of neglect, I still feel hardcore is kind of my baby. Granted, it's a baby that I abandoned when it was in kindergarten, but I still feel it's got a speck of my DNA rattling around in there somewhere and I still like to see what it's up to every now and again. Daragh from *Midlife Crisis Era HC*, however—an Ontario schoolteacher in his late forties—is a disciple who never strayed from the flock, and remains, in his own words, "a proud lifelong fan of what is ultimately a fairly mediocre genre of music." His cerebral, impeccably-thought-out approach to interviewing hardcore bands reads like it was written by Mike Faloon in spiked wristbands, occasionally leading to unintentionally amusing exchanges such as this: (DARAGH) *"With the lyrics on the 7", like 'What Is This Hell?', at first glance you look at the translation of that lyric and it could almost be standard D-beat fare with images of children's bodies on the beaches and what not, but singing them in Arabic and the artwork and everything it adds this other layer and this other context to things... do you think that punk lyrics risk trivializing these sorts of situations around the world?"* (BAND) *"Yes, for sure."* This issue features lengthy interviews with Haram (a New York hardcore band who sing in Arabic), Forward (from Japan), and France's Gasmask Terror, complete with footnotes. I don't know that I'm more into this music now than I was yesterday, but this zine is rad as hell. –Rev. Nørb (midlifecrisiserahc@gmail.com)

MINOR LEAGUES #2, £2, 4¼", x 5¾", copied, 40 pgs.
This is a pleasant little zine of drawings, photographs, and a few vignettes about nothing much at all. Sort of a window into some slice-of-life spring moments in an English town somewhere. Quick read (more of a flip-through, really), but it's sweet. –Indiana Laub (Little Leagues, smoo-comics.com, minorleagues.zine@gmail.com)

PASAZER #34/35, $20, 8¼" x 11½", offset, 244 pgs.
You could say this is the MRR of Poland, as it's packed with information on the latest bands, from past to present, and though focused on happenings and bands within Poland, they also cover what's happening in the rest of the world. This issue features interviews with El Banda, Cela Nr 3, Abortti 13, MDC, Fate, and more. There are also articles and reviews. If you can read Polish, then punk rock heaven can be found here between the glossy full-color cover and perfect bound spine. The rest of us will have to enroll and learn the language, and enjoy the photos while we do. Comes with a CD comp too! –Matt Average (PO Box 42, 39-201 Debica 3, Poland, pazaser@pasazer.pl)

POSITIVE CREED #35, $?, 8¼" x 11½", 24 pgs.
For a fairly old school photocopy punk music zine from England, I quite enjoyed this read, even if nothing revolutionary was happening. I guess perhaps being a fan or interested in a lot of the music covered in the issue goes a long way. There are interviews with Interrobang? (ex-Chumbawamba, which, the interview makes clear, carries a surprisingly large bit of pull with concertgoers), photographer Mark Richards, and band In Evil Hour. The interview I found most enlightening was with Steve Lake of Zounds, who I own a CD by, but honestly still didn't know much about the band, despite their very interesting cover art and anarcho punk scene associations. The real meat and potatoes of the issue to me, though, were the retrospective review of Motörhead's *Orgasmatron* and the tribute of remembrances about Pete Shelley of the Buzzcocks. The contextualizing of the Motörhead album makes me want to give it a concentrated listen someday, and as someone who had seen the Buzzcocks every chance I got, I just really love the band and Pete Shelley's contributions to the world. –Adrian Salas (Rob, positivecreed@gmail.com)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PRISON-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX & THE GLOBAL ECONOMY, THE, 5½" x 8½", $3, copied, 24 pgs.
I've been grinding my teeth thinking about the prison-industrial complex for decades. It's not something I'm unfamiliar with. Our familiarity with it, however, doesn't mean we should grow lax. So wherever you are in your knowledge of it, I recommend you read this zine. Boning up doesn't hurt, and this zine cites facts and puts things in perspective succinctly and systematically. I'm keeping my copy around for referencing. Buy a few copies and hand them out. Or buy one copy and make copies. –Craven Rock (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623, PMPress.org)

PUNKS AROUND #7, $3, 5½" x 8½", 36 pgs.
This issue of a Massachusetts-based zine is female-centric, subtitled "The Girl's Room," and it's edited by usual contributor Liz Hafey. Included in the issue is writing on neuroscience and interviews with a Boston area zine, and skate polymath Mona/Moma Magi about female spaces and the power that is the privilege/freedom to occasionally fail. It also includes an interview with Providence area scene supporter Mary about what it takes to hold together and build up a punk scene, particularly from a woman's perspective. There is also a detailed anonymous submission about the challenges with sexism facing a female musician—especially a solo one—even within the punk scene. This essay works almost as a companion piece with the following contribution from Lyds about the more holistically ingrained sexism and reluctance to address it in various punk scenes, even from an international perspective (she's writing about Greece, but spent time in the U.S. contributing to *Maximum Rocknroll*). These sexism issues sadly seem to be pretty consistent through the years, so hopefully shedding light on them helps to continually erode their hold on punk and society in general. My personal favorite parts of the issue though are the wild Russian tour story from Jenny Woo and the great *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*-inspired tour story from Doris of C.H.E.W. Luckily no one in the band was barbequed, but sometimes situations can start to mirror the movies in ways that are just a little too eerie. All in all, this issue is a good read. –Adrian Salas (Alexander Herbert, 10 Mathewson Ave., Attleboro, MA 02703)

$PARE ¢HANGE #37, $3 ppd., 5½" x 8½", copied, 40 pgs.
Two new stories from Chattanooga punk house "Anarchtica," describing the stresses and obligations of running a DIY venue. In this issue, the basement where the shows are held is described in intimate detail, the extension cords constantly blowing fuses to the house upstairs, water heaters and pipes in consistent danger of being broken from dancing and raucous shows, and of course the bathroom situation. One that any punk knows is always an… adventure when you run a show or attend a show at a punk house. A second story tells of several interactions dealing with cops being called on the punk house because of the noise, or cars being "improperly" parked on the streets. The futility of a cop trying to break up a punk show over and over was an interesting read, and the persistence to run this venue and house is admirable. Flyers for several shows are interspersed throughout the design as well. –Tricia Ramos ($pare ¢hange, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

STORY OF MY LIFE, THE, $?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 20 pgs.
Written straight from the life of Aki Ra, a former child soldier for the Khmer Rouge, this zine is a short but concise glimpse into the history of Cambodia, and the violence and wars the nation has endured. At only five, Aki Ra experienced life as a boy soldier. By ten, he was given his first gun and taught to kill. Throughout his life he was moved from army to army, fighting for different reasons unending. Finally, as a teen, the United Nations came to Cambodia to clear land mines and recruited locals to assist them. Aki Ra joined, and after the United Nations left, he was inspired to continue dismantling and removing land mines. He has since opened a land mine museum to show tourists and locals alike the recent history of Cambodia, and to hopefully teach and inspire others to join him in helping clear land mines from his nation. –Tricia Ramos (The Story of My Life, akira_cambodia@yahoo.com)

subTERRAIN #82, $8 Can./$7 U.S., 5½" x 9", offset, 96 pgs.
I'm not sure if *subTerrain* is intentionally distancing itself from the ivory tower of literary journals by calling itself a magazine, in spite of sharing the same sort of content (fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, book reviews, et cetera.). My guess is no, but they'd be right to do so. I think they should allow even further distancing. I'll tell you why. It's simple. *SubTerrain* rocks and literary journals suuuuuuck! Nothing about *subTerrain* has that journal feel. It lacks that shitty, graduate-degree-damaged creative writing selected (under duress) by a glazed-over and bitter college intern written by some desperate hack who gauges their self-worth on getting published by someone else. The theme of *subTerrain #82* is "shame" and the editors have carefully selected writing by a diversity of people from POC to prisoners, with the strongest piece written by an elderly woman. Though the reality of the writer's lives may differ greatly from the reader, most of them navigate sublimely the unique space of their struggle with shame while at the same time presenting it as universally human. –Craven Rock (subTerrain Magazine, PO Box 3008 Main Post Office, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3X5, Canada, subter@portal.ca)

These comics do a great job at making us look at ourselves in the worst possible light while making us chuckle about it.

–jimmy cooper | UNVERIFIABLE COMICS: IMMATURE HUMOR FOR ADULTS #3

SUPER COOL AND STUFF: #8, $3/trade, 5½" x 8½", copied, 24 pgs.
Even in the context of punk comics, I just can't connect with wrestling. It's hard for me to make the mental connection between sentimental emotions and burly people smacking each other with chairs. I struggle to comprehend sometimes how these two things even exist on the same plane of reality. I don't fault Ricky Vigil for this; it's my own personal disconnection. The comic itself has some solid art and some quirky humor, but this issue had a focus that just made my eyes glaze over. Hit me up when you talk about comics or punk records. –Gwen Static (Ricky Vigil, rickyvigil.com)

UNVERIFIABLE COMICS: IMMATURE HUMOR FOR ADULTS #3, $2 (zine and sticker), 5½" x 8", copied.
Scathing and nihilistic in the way memes tend to be (and the author does declare: "You know, if you don't stop looking at memes, one of these days you're going to turn into one!"), these comics hit a little too close to home on life in the "late anthropocene." Life in the contemporary political landscape is pretty fucked up—that doesn't need saying, but sometimes, with a touch of humor, it does, even if it makes us a bit uncomfortable to admit that, say, when we have our phones surveilling us all the time, it's a little hypocritical to be nervous about a "robot uprising." And it's easier to admit these things with a little bit of levity thrown in. I love comics for this reason, and these comics do a great job at making us look at ourselves in the worst possible light while making us chuckle about it. Slightly uncomfortable, for that reason, but all the way fun. –jimmy cooper (AN!F, PO Box 345 Putney, VT 05346)

URBAN GUERRILLA ZINE #21, $1 ppd. or trade, 5½" x 8½", printed, 36 pgs.
This photography zine (and one interview with California zinester and punk rocker, Matt Average), continues to feel like the beat of the pulse of the Bay Area in some ways. The photos range from documenting live bands, skating, graffiti, low riders, and the everyday faces you could see around town. The photos are beautifully taken and feel very personal, and the zine comes with stickers and two gel bracelets, which was an added bonus! –Tricia Ramos (Urban Guerrilla Zine, 1442A Walnut St. #419, Berkeley, CA 94709)

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NEW ALBUM - Orua - Roma LP
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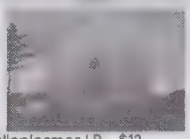

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COBRASIDE

1919
By Eve L. Ewing, 88 pgs.

The Great Migration, the exodus of millions of black Americans from the South to the North, began in 1916 and lasted for a few decades. The migrants were unwelcome, and the drowning of a young black man in Chicago's Lake Michigan on July 27, 1919—white people on the shore may have knocked him unconscious by throwing rocks, or he may have drowned trying to avoid those people—was the catalyst for a race riot.

Poet and sociologist Eve L. Ewing chanced upon a 1922 report titled *The Negro in Chicago: A Study on Race Relations and a Race Riot*, inspiring a series of poems on the migration and riot, plus a few about Chicago in more recent decades.

The poems don't offer historical instruction (so keep reading). Instead it's an authoritative and entertaining panoply of voices and styles, including biblical verse, jump-rope chant, and government document. (And I will resist qualifying "entertaining.")

Ewing quotes the report as saying that Chicagoans saw The Great Migration as "the worst calamity that had struck the city since the Great Fire." One of Ewing's poems is titled "True Stories About the Great Fire":

Everything they tell you is wrong.
The Great Fire came here in a pair of worn loafers.
eating its last sandwich wrapped in paper
and the Great Fire had a smell of grease and flowers.

William Faulkner, I think, said something to the effect that people write novels because they lack the skill to tell their story within the concision of a poem. I've never seen this maxim demonstrated more masterfully than in Ewing's poem "keeping house," in which a black maid tells us about her life with her white employer. I'd quote a verse/section, but that would be like quoting twelve percent of the year's best novel about twentieth century American race relations. –Jim Woster (Haymarket Press, HaymarketBooks.org)

Forty-Five Thought Crimes: New Writing
By Lynn Breedlove, 95 pgs.

I feel I've read these poems before. This isn't a commentary on originality; this is what it should feel like to have your life represented on the page. There have been anthologies published on trans poetics—and debates, too— around what makes a "queer" art, a "trans" art; how can it ever be universal? The answer, of course, is that it never can be and never will be. But as diverse experiences—the experiences, say, of transmasculine queers or spiritual queers or punk queers—become better represented (and thank whatever powers that may be that trans representation has come far enough queer punks can be published, too), a politics starts to develop. Sets of, not universalities, but commonalities; things often shared.

In the same light as Cristy C. Road's *Next World Tarot,* or Alex Wrekk's current work—or the resurgence as a whole, of holistic, even secular spiritualities within the queer and punk communities—Breedlove's is a spiritual text, invoking the ancestor, Prince, the meditation of loving someone so truly. Breedlove does not shy from history, from his history in Tribe 8, as a "dyke," something transmasculine folks often shy away from. I often joke "dykes taught me how to dress," but aside from that, I rarely acknowledge that was once a community I considered myself a part of, however briefly, now that I've "transitioned," whatever that means when you're non-binary.

The work these poems do, the creation and recognition of these histories (and for Breedlove, this is not just his gender and sexuality, it is, too, about his mixed indigenous and German heritage), though confusing and uncomfortable, are necessary to build an understanding of queerness, of fluidity, of our own histories and the knowledge that they are never as simple as we are taught to believe. So though I've read these poems before, I was happy to read them again, and to feel bolstered by them in a way we all deserve to. –jimmy cooper (Manic D Press, manicdpress.com)

Frame of Mind:
Punk Photos and Essays from Washington DC, and Beyond, 1997-2017
By Antonia Tricarico, 176 pgs.

Antonia Tricarico's *Frame of Mind* is a picture book that spans from 1997 to 2017 and while the work is primarily of D.C. bands, it covers other acts Tricarico captured throughout the U.S. and Europe. The book also includes essays by different women in music, including Alice Bag, Allison Wolfe, Joan Jett, and more.

It was enlightening to read how each person got into punk and found their place as musicians. In that sense, it was also empowering and I hope many young women who are contemplating playing an instrument will read these essays to show it is possible for them to also become musicians.

There were three things I especially liked about this book. One was the range of bands and artists. There are acts such as Fugazi captured on one page followed by bands I hadn't heard of like Sneaks. Second, Tricarico takes some remarkable action photos. There are moments where she captures Scream literally screaming, Ian Svenonius dancing on stage, or L7 playing what I can imagine is a powerful riff. The final thing Tricarico does in *Frame of Mind* is give us insight into casual and intimate moments in the D.C. scene. There are pictures of bands and their family and friends together. I especially liked Scott Weinrich of St. Vitus with his baby, Flea talking with Amy Farina of the Evens, and Fugazi goofing around on a playground in Italy.

I couldn't help but notice there were a number of pictures of Joe Lally of Fugazi. When I looked into that I found out that Tricarico and Lally are married. I can't help but think having that relationship enabled Tricarico to get more consistent and intimate access of Fugazi, allowing her to have photos of the band that are better than most of those in Glen E. Friedman's *Keep Your Eyes Open.*

I must admit I wasn't expecting much from this book because I had no idea who Tricarico is, but her ability to take a wide range of musicians in various experiences and both show their energy and their humanity really makes these pages shine. The additional focus on women musicians both in photos and essays makes this one a keeper. –Kurt Morris (Akashic Books, 232 Third St., Suite A115, Brooklyn, NY 11215)

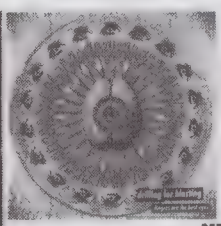
House of the Black Spot
By Ben Sears, 80 pgs.

It's hard to describe the world of Ben Sears' *Double+* stories. First, I'll attempt to describe Sears' style: chunky cartoonish characters that remind you of the *Aardman* stop motion movies à la *Wallace and Gromit*. I hear British accents in my head while I'm reading the dialogue in his books. There is an extremely impressive amount of detail put into the architecture and backgrounds in Sears's comics. The lines aren't perfectly straight but they are definitely eye candy.

Now, the *Double+* stories themselves. Our main protagonist is Plus Man, an adventurer/delivery boy who always dons a helmet and goggles. He's cool, helpful, and doesn't put up with bullhonkey. Plus Man is accompanied by Hank, who is a floating round metal robot with arms and nothing else. The peculiar part about the robots in this universe is they are never treated as such. It's very funny when there are references to them eating, having children, running businesses, and wearing clothes. In this wild brick and mortar, almost steampunk-ish world, Plus Man and Hank find themselves in some sort of chase or in the middle of a mystery.

In *House of the Black Spot*, the duo is sent out to the country home of Hank's recently deceased uncle, Bill, for a reading of the will. And it becomes a *Scooby Doo* mystery from there. You got the greedy real estate moguls, the snobby son of Uncle Bill, the aloof housekeepers, and of course, the G-G-G-GHOST! The tenants are haunted by the ghost of the industrialist Frederick Wentworth. Despite it being a classic murder mystery including secret passages and red herrings, it spins a couple of *Scooby Doo* tropes on their head.

There are some good punk rock sensibilities in this book. Plus Man is almost like a kid in a touring band. He washes the dishes, offers to make



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food, is generous to his hosts, and has some pretty hilarious digs on the rich butts in the story. All without a single swear word.

This is the first Ben Sears book I have seen in full color. And he truly kills it. This is one of the most vibrant and colorful comics I have seen in a very long time. While staring and studying every detail going on in every panel, you will think you're crying. But that's just your eyeballs drooling. It's a quick read that all ages will definitely enjoy. I can imagine many school kids doodling Plus Man on their book covers. –Rick V. (Koyama Press, koyamapress.com)

out job resumes. The second half is the story of "Lorna's First Date." Lorna reflects on how she built up the courage to threaten a boy into going on a picnic with her. And dark hilarity ensues.

This is a weird, uncomfortable, and great comic. One would expect no less from Benji Nate (whose previous book *Catboy* took the youth by storm). The artwork is great and done with colored markers. It's super solid and worth picking up. On the first page, Nate says they will be releasing more Lorna comics the future. You should be very excited about that. –Rick V (Silver Sprocket, silversprocket.com)

While staring and studying every detail going on in every panel, you will think you're crying. But that's just your eyeballs drooling. –Rick V. | *House of the Black Spot*

Keep Your Eyes Open
By Glen E. Friedman, 120 pgs.

Keep Your Eyes Open is a collection of photos of Fugazi taken by Glen E. Friedman from the time the band began in 1987 until they went on their indefinite hiatus in the 2000s. Looking at the pictures in this second edition brought up a lot of memories for me. Fugazi's lyrics and music played a big role in my life. Many of their songs tie in with times in my teens and twenties. These include moments when I drove the Midwestern backroads where I grew up, when I shared what Fugazi meant to me with friends in college, and times I watched sunsets from my parents house where I lived after college.

Fugazi's lyrics caused me to re-evaluate my political and social views. I may not listen to Fugazi much anymore, but I hold them in the highest esteem. They're unlike any other band in the history of punk: putting out consistently great music while simultaneously sticking to their ideals. That being said, I come to *Keep Your Eyes Open* with a lot of emotions.

Friedman's photos show the band both in the live setting and in prepared photo shoots, in color and black and white. Simply looking at the photos and without any music, I was taken back to some of those times previously mentioned. This book has that power to move people.

The opening essay by Ian Svenonius is typical writing by the author/musician: using a philosophical and strange story to explain the history of the band and why they're important. It's a slog to get through (as I've often found Svenonius's writing to be) but does an adequate job of placing Fugazi's importance in context. What I very much enjoyed was the interview between Ian Mackaye and Friedman at the end of the book, which is new as of this second edition. It provided insight into the pictures chosen and the process of putting together the book, as well as the relationship between Friedman and the band.

There are a few things I wish would've been improved, however. I wish Friedman would've given more insights and thoughts on each of the photos. I also wish he hadn't overlaid some photos on top of portions of others (which is also a complaint Mackaye states in the Q&A). Additionally, it would've been nice to see some more relaxed, casual shots of the band in their everyday life. There were only a handful of those and even the action shots didn't always come to take on the level I feel Fugazi's music emotionally conveyed. My final complaint is that while it's an interesting idea to give each page of the book a song title by Fugazi instead of a page number, it's also annoying.

Still, the book works. It's a good compendium of a band whose importance was and is vital in punk and while the band is more than what's captured here, Friedman's relationship with the group over a few decades is integral in giving listeners an insight into this act that was key to how we see punk. –Kurt Morris (Akashic Books, 232 Third St., Suite A115, Brooklyn, NY 11215)

Lorna
By Benji Nate, 54 pgs.

Lorna is an introverted young woman who likes cats, reading, sharp objects, and seems to always be near corpses. The first half of this issue is a collection of one- to two-page comic strips about the shenanigans Lorna gets into. Like hanging out in trashcans, dismembering reptiles, picking clothing off aforementioned corpses, hanging out with her friend Norma, and filling

Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed
By Lisa Duggan, 136 pgs.

I didn't read Ayn Rand's massive novels *The Fountainhead* and *Atlas Shrugged* prior to realizing I'm going to die someday, and so missed my window. I've read *The Virtue of Selfishness*, a book of essays by her and a boyfriend about her philosophy of Objectivism—they really phone in the "virtue" part—or maybe I'm just a virtue-signaler. (I'm waiting for the vocabulary assassins of the Twitter Right to target the phrase "good deeds.") I'd thought my knowledge of Rand was adequate—or at least, I didn't think I'd put any work into expanding it.

Then came NYU Professor Lisa Duggan's *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed*. It's part of the University of California Press's *American Studies Now* series, which Duggan describes as "short, timely, accessible books for activists as well as students."

We learn about Rand's childhood in pre- and post-revolutionary St. Petersburg—no one with her childhood was going to grow up to be too far left of center—and how with impressive effort for a young woman in Soviet Russia in 1926, she made it to America. Making a presumably accidental point in favor of Objectivism, Duggan writes Rand had a "rather uncanny ability to get what she wanted."

We then read very welcome summaries of her novels and their ideas, with insight into events from her life that influenced the novels. I needed *Mean Girl* and didn't know it.

The book is accessibly written, though it refers frequently to the ideology of "neoliberalism"—which Duggan's glossary says is about redistributing resources upward—as though everyone is familiar with it, and I'd never come across the term before.

The Fountainhead is, as Duggan writes, "a fat novel, full of long didactic speeches." But it's sold more than six and a half million copies and paved a significant stretch of the road that got us to Trump's America. How the hell did that happen? Duggan sheds a lot of light and only needed 136 pages to do it. –Jim Woster (University of California Press, UCPress.edu)

Teen Movie Hell
By Mike "McBeardo" McPadden, 351 pgs.

Remember being a teenager in the '80s and not having any friends who could drive yet? What would you do on a Friday night? You would sneak over to whichever buddy had cable TV and find those pay channels. That's where the goldmine of teen comedy flicks would pop up at midnight. So maybe it has been a few years since you watched *Class*. Or *My Tutor*? Even *Porky's*? Well, now you have your complete guide all in one volume. McBeardo covers every movie-from A-Z. I do mean *every* movie. The '70s and '90s see their share, but it is the golden era of the '80s that gets the spotlight. When McBeardo has to put the beer bong down for a minute, he has a team of guest contributors ready, willing, and able to step up to the plate. The enjoyment for me was remembering movies I hadn't seen in decades. There were many times where I totally agreed with the review's final ratings. *Valley Girl*? A classic, of course. *Loverboy*? Horrible. I will stray from the party line and say that although it got panned in this book, I will always have a soft spot in my heart for Nick Nolte in *Teachers*. Is this book politically correct? Absolutely not—but that is what makes nostalgia fun! I for one can't wait to see *King Frat* for the first time. It sounds fantastic. –Sean Koepenick (Bazillion Points, bazillionpoints.com)

William Burroughs is a guy who drunkenly shot his wife to death. Rae mentions this, but there's not much in the way of reckoning here.

–Michael T. Fournier | *William S. Burroughs and the Cult of Rock'n'roll*

William S. Burroughs and the Cult of Rock'n'roll
By Casey Rae. 304 pgs.

I wasn't sure how I'd feel about this one based on a bunch of recent conversations. For one, I just saw Weird Al for the second time. It's no surprise that all of Al's Michael Jackson parodies have been scrubbed from the performance. This dovetailed into reading Emily Nussbaum's new book, in which she discusses, among other things, the way that her perceptions of Louis C.K. changed in the wake of allegations against the comedian. Closer to home, apparently Morrissey is an alt-right asshole now, and as I mentioned in my review of Ellen Sander's *Trips* in issue #112, members of Led Zeppelin assaulted Sander and had to be pulled off by the band's manager.

So where does this leave us in terms of fandom?

Nussbaum argues for a wrestling with the past. If we take Morrissey as an example, the thought of cutting him from the conversation entirely doesn't pain me as much as allegations against other musicians might. But I have friends (and I'm sure you do, too) who have hard choices to make regarding the weight of the man's catalogue vs. the weight of his heel turn.

In *William S. Burroughs and the Cult of Rock'n'roll*, Casey Rae does an exhaustive job connecting ol' Bill to scads of musicians. The scope of Burroughs's influence is stunning: the tendrils of his cut-up method, heroin use, and world-weariness extend from Bob Dylan and the Beatles to Throbbing Gristle to Grant Hart to Nirvana and Ministry. Rae's research connects specific songs and lyrics to Burroughs's writing, and the stories of rock luminaries' relationships with Burroughs are interesting throughout.

With all that said, I don't see a lot of *wrestling* in this book. William Burroughs is a guy who drunkenly shot his wife to death; William Burroughs is a guy whose well-documented heroin use glamorized the drug. Rae mentions these things, but there's not much in the way of reckoning here. To be fair, I haven't read other Burroughs biographies, so I don't know what's already been covered. That said, the members of the rock scene mentioned here are drawn to Burroughs and his work like moths to bad behavior. I'm still not sure how to feel about it all now that I've finished reading. But I'm a Patriots fan, so what do I know? –Michael T. Fournier (University of Texas Press, utexaspress.com)

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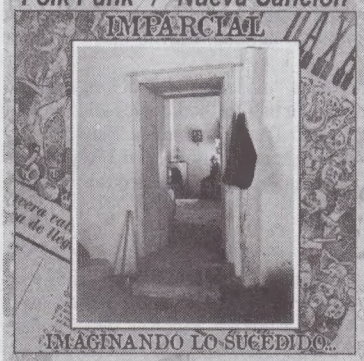

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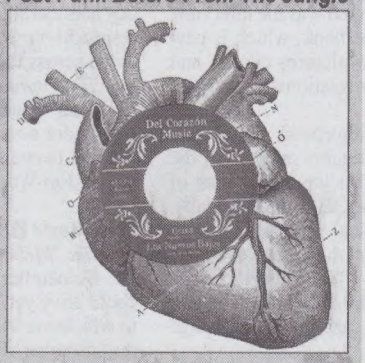

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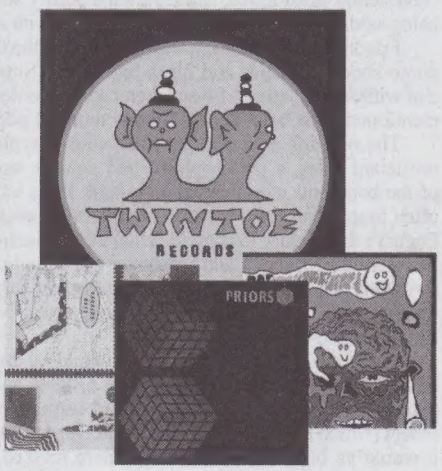

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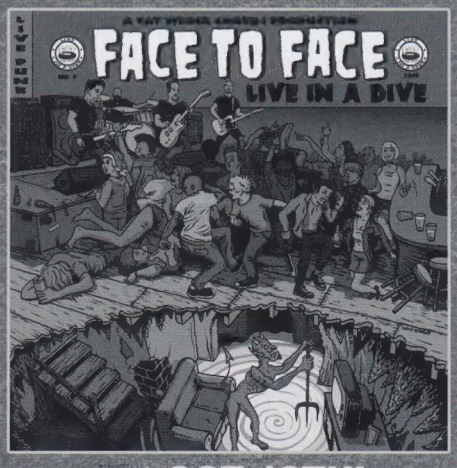

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